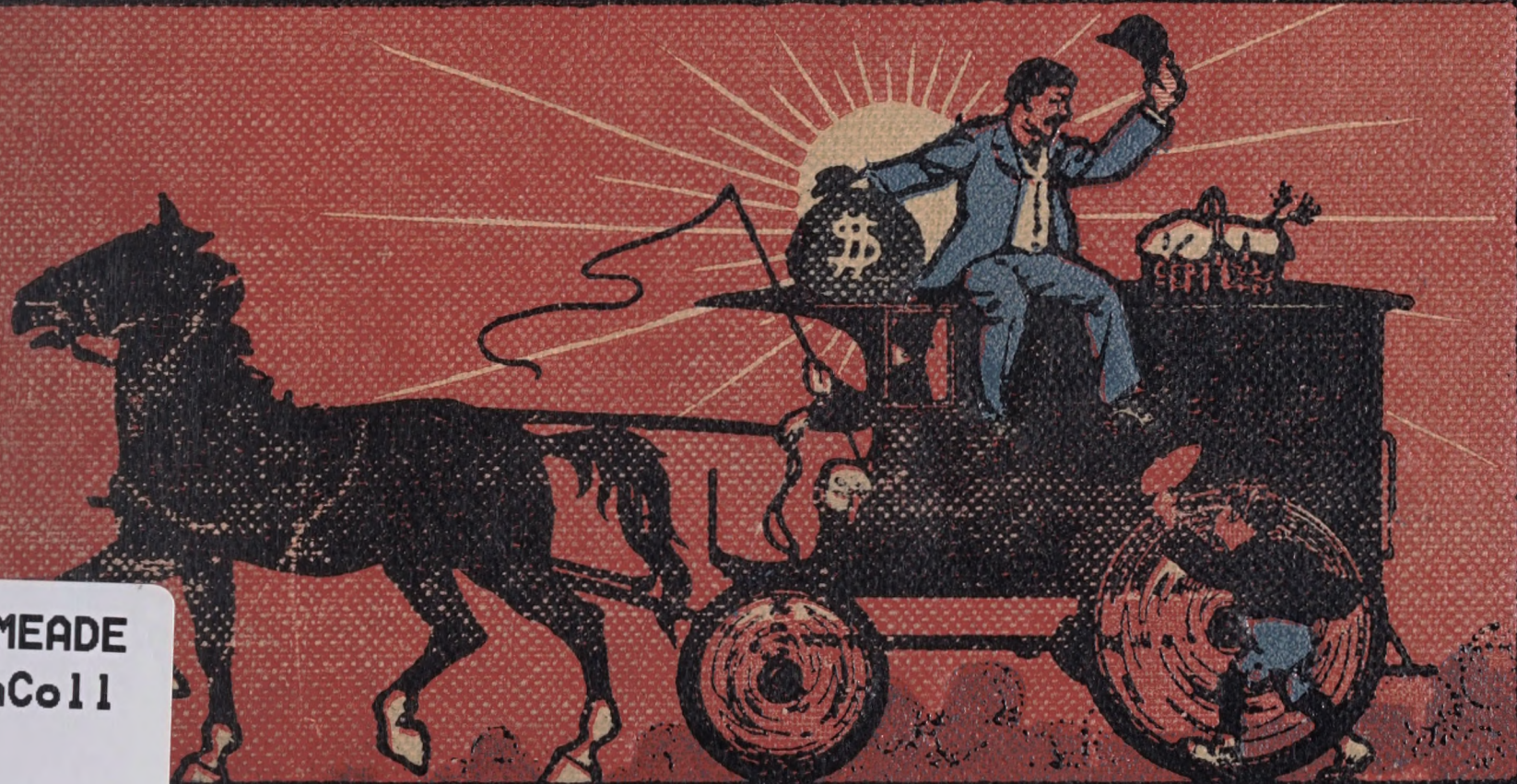
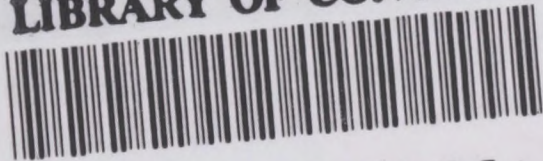


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**ON AND OFF
THE BREAD WAGON**



ON AND OFF THE BREAD WAGON

BEING THE HARD LUCK
TALES, DOINGS AND
ADVENTURES OF AN
AMATEUR HOBO

BY

CHARLES DRYDEN

AUTHOR OF "BILL BARNACLE,"
"SWANSON, ABLE SEAMAN," ETC.

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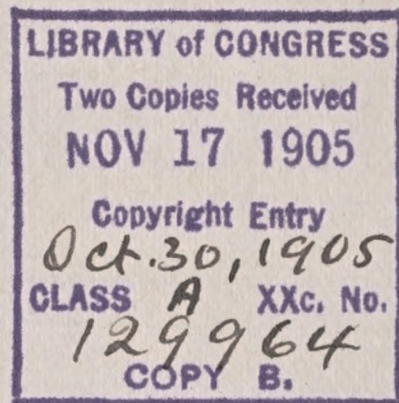
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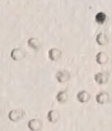
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ON AND OFF THE BREAD WAGON



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ON AND OFF THE BREAD WAGON

CHAPTER I.

A Look Backward to His First Journey Into the Great Wide World, and Some Experiences of His Tender Years—The Effect of Clothes on Human Nature.

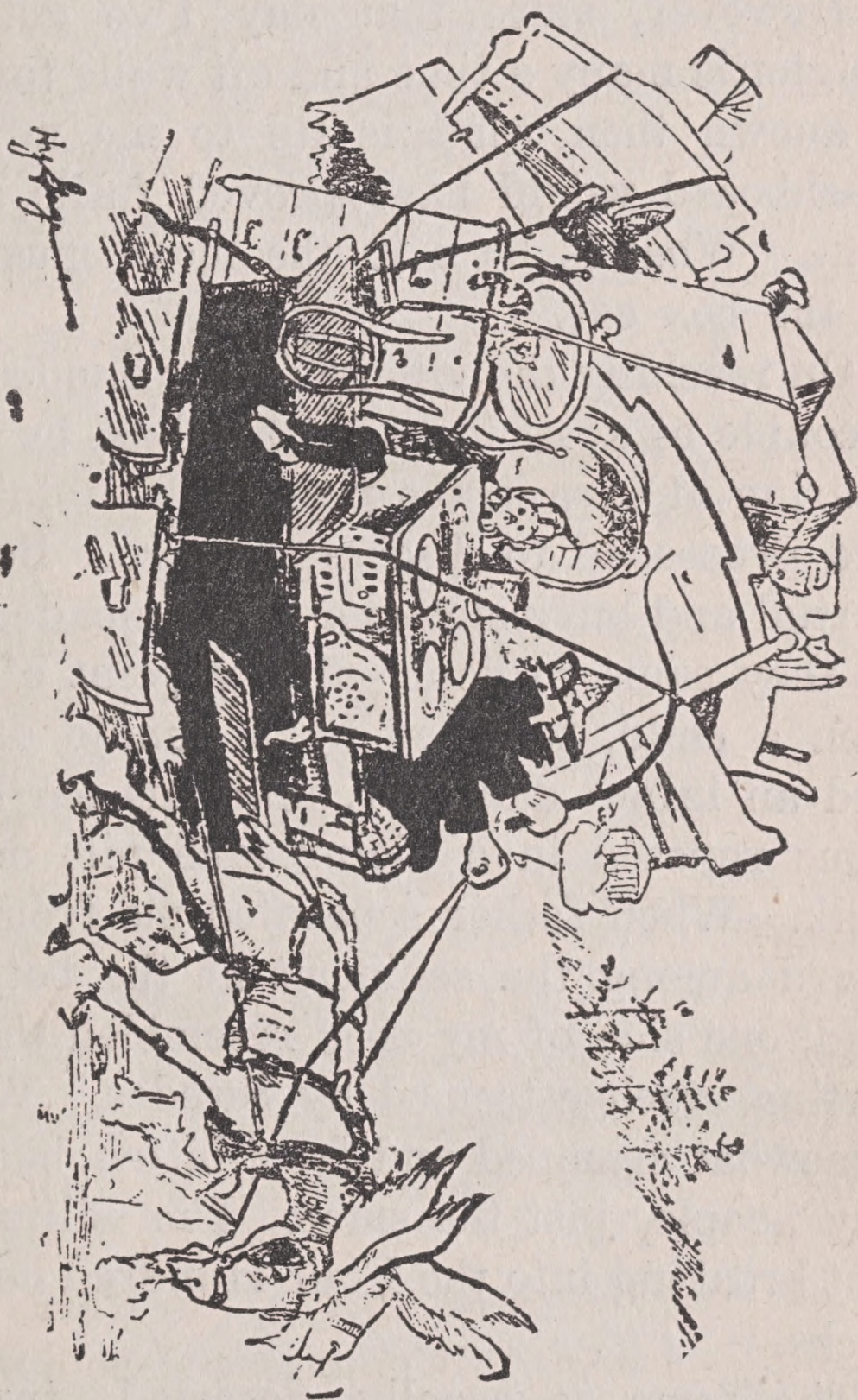
At the age of five years, quite a while before the hobo instinct steered me into serious trouble, I first enjoyed the delights of travel—of going somewhere and seeing things. The preliminary dash was made in a family bobsled over a twelve-mile straightaway course in the middle of winter. Time, the late 60's, which date is close enough for the purpose of this confession.

It was not the scenery en route that stirred my nomadic blood, for I failed to observe any. The tribe to which I belonged was migrating out of season—in other words, moving from the farm where I occurred to a little mud-streaked village in Western Illinois. As for the town, it was then on the map, and it submits that fact as an excuse

for being there still. There is no accounting for the tact of some towns.

What landscape, if any, invited inspection along that frozen twelve-mile route is lost to me forever. Family complications bungled the trip, in my case, at least. Exclusive of parents, there were eight little sunbeams—six of us in the original package, and a job lot of two—father having married a second time. And don't forget the furniture. Children, parents and chattels were massed in one stupendous aggregation in the bobsled. This over-worked vehicle was an ordinary farm wagon box, with supplementary side boards, set on snow runners and propelled by a pair of low-pressure mules.

Of course, we were somewhat crowded in the cabin—not a soul had room to speak, in the words of that old McGuffey School Reader poem. It wouldn't do to lose any children, and furniture was even more expensive at that period. So we all stuck together, some stowed right side up, and some wrong: I held a position near the bottom of the load, with my neck resting on the ruffled bosom of a zinc washboard. For years afterward I wondered what had made me so cold and dismal, not to say clammy. The wisdom that comes from rubbering eventually set my mind at ease, but not until I had observed the metal lining they put in



“CHILDREN, PARENTS AND CHATELS WERE AMASSED IN ONE STUPENDOUS
AGGREGATION IN THE BOBSLED.”

ice boxes. It's a wonder I did not become an Arctic explorer.

However, since that day I've got it in the epiglottis many a time and oft while touring. Had I known then what is up to me now the zinc washboard would have proved futile as a deterrent. What is born in the blood must come out in the box car.

On reaching the village father handed the mules a couple of swift kicks in the slats, by way of appearing at ease in the presence of total strangers, and proceeded to discharge cargo. Being an impartial and busy stevedore, he unloaded his assets as they came to hand—first a joint of stovepipe, then a child, followed by a bundle of bed slats and an infant daughter, until his earthly possessions reposed in a picturesque pile on the sidewalk. When father separated me from the washboard among the sediment at the bottom of the load, one side of my neck resembled the blue concertina much esteemed by Swedes. We all were somewhat cramped and frost-bitten, but glad to be city people, just the same. I'm willing to admit that breaking into the Four Hundred has its drawbacks.

The farm so cruelly deserted, twelve miles away, was situated on the county line. This I knew from hearing father speak of it, and, as

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county line sounded good to me, I featured it in my language, using appropriate gestures on the side. The frequency with which county line butted into informal chats with the village boys conferred upon me a pleasing foreign air, extremely rare in those parts. What a traveler I was in those days—a regular cuss on runners! The bug that made me a hobo was working in my system.

Another rough and ready trait of the tourist early developed was my utter refusal to pose as a fashion plate at Mudville, Ill., for garb cut no ice with me. When I was ten years old, father ordered built for each of his two sons a beautiful cozy cloth cape. Those duds were dreams until we tried to wear them in the presence of other boys, when said garments became nightmares that shriveled our wretched little souls. The nightmares had pockets inside, and were lined with red flannel, crimped around the bottom like the edge of a pie. It baffles a boy to stow his fists in unseen pockets. Let the more subtle female intellect cope with the puzzle-page pocket. She has more time.

Every Sunday father martyred us in the capes, after fastening paper collars to horn buttons, sewn on the neckbands of our shirts, of which we each had one. Then he led us to the gate and pointed in the direction of Sunday

school, and it meant a loss of cuticle if we failed to come back with the text. Around the first corner, in front of the home of a very wealthy man, stood a cord of wood. There brother and I paused and peeled, bundled the capes into small wads and stuffed them into the woodpile. The cloth was the color of oak with the bark on, and no one ever spotted our Sissy regalia.

Many a day when Mercury flirted with Zero me and Bill made a grand triumphal entry at Sunday school, arrayed in the paper collars and a purple smile. As the senior of Bill and the originator of this dress reform movement, all I lacked was a tin can like Happy Hooligan's to put me in right. The large, warm, old ladies who taught the classes looked at us and wept. They said it was a crime to send a field of selling platters away from the post to such a start. However, these remarks never touched me and Bill, for our souls were serene in cold storage. On the way back me and Bill made another lightning change at the woodpile, and took chances with the gang on the home stretch of one short block.

It is the dearest wish of my life that parents who haberdash male offspring contrary to the boyish idea of the eternal fitness of things and clothes will read this wail and take a much-needed tumble. Don't tog your son like a freak,

which freak, to his mind, is the girl. If you cannot dress Harold as he sees other boys dressed let him wear an Apache G string and be happy while he may. The Lord never intended him for parental torture. He will get what's coming to him, all in good time and plenty of it.

Another pale, studious lad in that town wore a plaid shawl skewered beneath his chin with an iron bolt which had a large moss agate knob at the end. Also he wore a pair of high-heeled, thin Morocco shoes, supposed to be his mother's, laced all the way to the top. That boy has since won international renown as a skirt dancer, and is now a sedate man of family and a creator of millinery at my old home. Yet the plaudits of the twenty and thirty brought him no lasting joy, for the great white light of fame still beats upon the name of Sis. He never will be able to smother it. Loie Fuller, the boss serpentunist of all ages, likewise came from Mudville, Ill., and yet I do not recall Loie as a maiden tripping blithely to school in overalls and one suspender, which attire her smouldering genius should have demanded.

But a short time ago I visited Mudville and noted among other improvements the rehabilitation of a late harness shop. The end had been blasted out to make room for an entire plate

glass front inscribed in tall letters of gold: Dunkerr, Parisian Importations. Though that magic name rated one more R than he could afford when a boy, I felt in my bones it was Sis, who had reached that pinnacle of earthly greatness which permits a man to monkey with the spelling of his name. Pausing outside the lid works, under pretense of admiring the creations in window display, I peeked inside.

The centre piece in a bewildering symposium of Oriental grandeur was Sis, lolling in a low rocker planted on a Turkish rug. His brown hair, brushed well back, revealed a placid brow, care-free and unwrinkled by thought, time or trouble. The years had wrestled gently with Sis. Diamonds blazed on the fingers that once did duty as handkerchiefs, and his sylph-like person was arrayed in summer toilet—negligee shirt waist of white silk—row of diamond studs and Byronic collar; and as he rocked and hummed a little tune his nimble needle created a delicate bit of tatting work.

Ranged in hanging balconies near the ceiling half a dozen female slaves toiled and fretted, building Parisian Importations so that Sis might strut in jewels and fine raiment. It was too much. The boy who wore the shawl had other people working for him, while I, who hid



Hyfoge

"WHEN HE VISITS CHICAGO TWICE A YEAR HE WEARS A PLUG HAT
AND A FEATHER BOA."

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my cape in the woodpile, lurked outside the palace an aged, bald-headed, baggy-kneed galoot who had burned up the better part of his life chasing freight trains and foundry jobs.

After a while I went in and met Sis. He was so glad I called he told me the story of his life while the enslaved milliners on the giddy perches above looked down and giggled softly. I related a few chapters myself, but didn't allude to the cape epoch in my career. Somehow I felt I had lost out. As a skirt dancer Sis starred in London, Paris, Berlin and at the Winter Palace at St. Petersburg. On the London circuit he had skirted, so to speak, as many as four music halls in one night, dashing about in diaphanous silk folds and a cab from place to place. With the wealth thus acquired he settled down at Mudville to a congenial life of easy quiet and independence.

Twice per year, spring and fall, Sis visits the wholesale millinery plants at Chicago, on which occasion, it is said, he wears a plug hat and feather boa. I was too sick at heart to hang around and see him start, and besides it's a cinch I wouldn't have laughed. To a matured vision many good things lose their wonted zest.

CHAPTER II.

His First Efforts as a Promoter and the Failure of Two Mining Ventures.

Primitive man dug holes in the earth, being too dopey to build skyscrapers, and boys of every generation since that epoch have burrowed under the crust in order to succeed as smuggler chiefs and bandit kings. Mudville, Ill., harbored a bold and hardy race of cave dwellers, whose repertoire had about petered out when the Mudville Mining and Manufacturing Company got busy on a flat stretch of prairie near the village.

That concern sunk a mine shaft and took out fire clay and coal which blended in the harmonious production of brick, pottery and drain tile. The black smoke could be seen for miles, and it painted fresh ambitions in budding minds. At the age of twelve I promoted two wildcat mining deals, the first of which proved a boomerang. The second assayed one mild mannered cow belonging to a widow, and a series of short school vacations on which I could draw at sight. Moreover, the stockholders in my company de-

clared themselves in on the dividend, and an era of prosperity struck the town.

The amateur mining craze first broke out in our own back yard. There was nothing to it, I thought, but a neat little coal business at home, and perhaps a pottery on the side. When the idea blossomed, I spoke to my younger brother, Bill, about it.

“What’s the use of digging where there ain’t no coal?” inquired the practical Bill.

That is where the promoter gets up against it always. The trouble with Bill was he lacked imagination. Why shouldn’t there be coal in our back yard if he only thought so? Bill was a peppery kid, full of force long before Sunny Jim’s time, and would make a valued assistant in the mining venture.

“If I prove there is coal in the lot will you help me dig?” I asked Bill.

He said he would, and I soon convinced that easy mark, being a natural-born promoter myself. Reading was my only vice at that date. In order to get at the books I buncoed the Warren County Library Association in the most cruel and sordid manner. Twice each week in winter I toted half a ton of coal in buckets up three flights of stairs from a cellar under the sidewalk. The librarian was a very old man

with two cork legs, and on that account he was ashamed to be seen carrying the coal himself.

In return for my trifling service the librarian gave me a book privilege ticket, good for six months, and worth \$1.50. It makes me blush even now to think how I swindled that poor old man, but I was like the drunkard away from his can. My very being thirsted for choice miscellany, useful facts worth knowing and light summer reading in winter. A deep and soulful longing for knowledge made me desperate, and I soon picked up a lot about coal—in buckets.

Well, I had read of the divining rod, and with that bit of witchery I worked Bill to the limit. First I salted the onion bed just west of the raspberry patch, by planting a flat lump of coal six inches underground and marking the spot. Then with an apple twig in the form of a Y, the easy Bill was led to his doom. He followed, pop-eyed, while I trailed about the garden, holding the divining rod by the double ends, with the stem of the Y pointing straight ahead. At the proper place the magic stem bent downward, and I whispered hoarsely to Bill:

“Dig here for treasure!”

I allowed him to dig, and when Bill uncovered the lumps of coal, he became lit up with the most gorgeous blaze of enthusiasm I ever be-



"I FOUND THE COAL WITH A DIVINING ROD."

held in a human being. That was promoting some, all right. Bill wanted to dig on the night shift, too, but I wouldn't let him. In a few days we sunk a shaft five or six feet deep and ran a drift off to one side in search of the mother lode. To support the roof of the tunnel we knocked the rain water barrel to pieces, sawed the staves in half and braced them up with timbers taken from the family woodpile. This was the only time we ever tackled the buck-saw in the role of little volunteers.

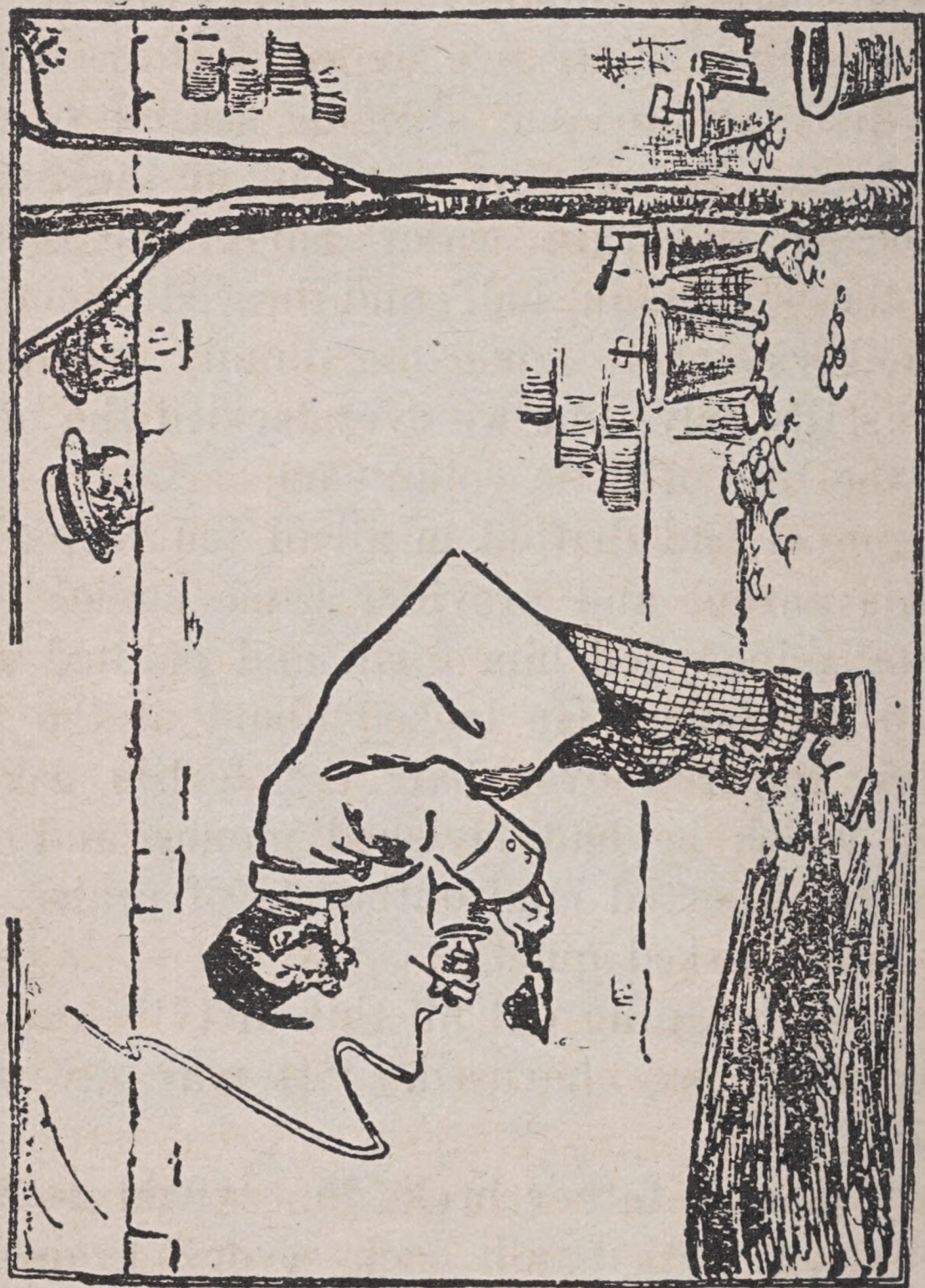
The tunnel had drifted in all of ten feet when our male parent and provider came home. His little boy miners led him forth and pointed with pride to the hole. He looked about at the yellow clay smeared over half the fertile garden spot on which he had lavished money and manure. We expected loud outbursts of praise. Instead, father asked quietly:

“Did you boys dig out all this dirt?”

“Yes, sir,” we chorused. “It was my idea and Bill he—”

“Very good,” father broke in. “And now let me see you put it all back—every grain—or I'll burn the pants off you both.”

That was the bitterest jolt of my young life up to date. Bill all but collapsed, for he believed in the coal fiction and my superior divining rod



“FATHER CAREFULLY INSPECTED THAT CLAY.”

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wisdom. We buried the dirt in the grave of blasted hopes and directed the obsequies all alone, for no other boys had been let into the digging and we couldn't expect help. It was awful work filling up the tunnel, pushing in the dirt with a hoe, and when that job was completed a period of depression fell upon the amateur mining industry at Mudville.

Later on in the season, being a resolute promoter, I launched the second venture. One square away lived the two Wilson boys, who luckily, had no father to butt into their vast and worthy enterprises. The Wilson boys readily believed the coal vein I found at home extended to their place, and a new company was formed to mine the stable lot of the Widow Wilson without securing from her a concession to the mineral rights.

The new company proceeded on a mammoth scale, rating a president, board of directors and a row of numbered pegs in the barn on which to hang our mining clothes. A committee appointed to steal a batch of miners' lamps from the pottery made good with a dozen, one for each stockholder. Though all the digging was done before and after school in the broad glare of an effulgent Illinois sun, we wore the lighted lamps on our brows just the same. Nothing

was too good for the Dryden-Wilson Mining Company, Limited.

In a short time we sunk a square shaft sixteen feet deep, using a windlass and bucket to hoist out the dirt and coal, when we struck it. The tough clay sides of the shaft needed no boxing, else the world might have lost a bunch of bright intellects in a premature mine horror. In the event of accident to the hoisting gear the shaft boss rigged an emergency ladder, built of two sixteen-foot fence boards borrowed from the widow. These boards were set upright against one wall of the shaft and fitted with rungs nailed on.

At this point in the development of the mine, the Lamp Committee, being unable to steal any powder, the stockholders were assessed for enough to blast out a tunnel. By unanimous vote, blasting was deemed more romantic than digging, and the price of one pound of fine rifle powder fairly flowed into the treasury.

A broomstick drill was used to bore a hole pointing downward at an angle of 45 degrees in the south wall of the shaft, two feet above the bottom. We tamped dirt on top of the powder and left a string of firecracker fuses hanging out for the match. Then arose a question of nerve to touch off the blast. Marsh Sloats, a

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husky lobster, six feet tall, at the schoolboy age, said he would do it in a jiffy. So we lowered him in and hauled up the bucket, his idea being to escape via the safety ladder, after firing the fuse.

While the daredevil Marsh was below the stock company withdrew to a vacant lot across the alley. He applied the match and climbed the ladder, the rungs of which were bits of lath, securely spiked to the uprights with tacks and second-hand shingle nails. Just as the head of the intrepid Sloats poked out of the hole the rung on which his fat feet rested broke off. The fall jerked loose the slat in his grip, and down he went with an awful burring sound, clutching at and kicking and ripping away every rung from top to bottom.

Silence more appalling than sound followed the thud when Marsh hit bottom; then came an anguished shriek of terror and calls for help. The shaft erupted the agony of young Sloats entombed with the blast, while we stood paralyzed watching for his atoms. Marsh begged his father and mother and an uncle who lived in Nebraska to save him. He cursed the company for not lowering the bucket, but mortal fear held us in a pallid group across the alley. The fuse had burned in beyond the reach of

his fingers, and it was up to the boss blast toucher to take what was coming to him.

When it came a whirling spiral cloud of white smoke, punctured by one hideous yell, shot up from the shaft. At the summit of the cloud, twenty feet in air, rode Marsh's limp straw hat. That was all. Nothing more—not even a sound—boiled out of the shaft, so the more courageous directors sneaked to the edge and looked down.

Sloats sat with his back braced against the wall, and was mining dirt out of his eyes, mouth, nose and ears, using his fingers for picks. The language that flowed from him dispelled the sulphur fumes and deadly after damp. As the frenzied blaster couldn't see very well, the company took a desperate chance, hoisted him up and scattered like a flock of quail. He was able and willing to lick the whole bunch, and we knew it. The tough clay confined the loosely tamped powder, and the bulk of the discharge, like that from a gun, had passed above him, and Sloats was not damaged, except in his pride. Our first and last blast failed to uncover any coal, yet the powder was not wholly wasted.

Next morning before daylight Roger Wilson, the mine boss, routed me out. His mother's only cow had fallen into the shaft over night and broken most of her legs, her neck and her spine

in three places, so Roger said in tragic whispers. Anyhow, the cow was a corpse, and Roger was doing a Paul Revere ride on foot, passing a hurry call among the directors for an urgent meeting at the mine.

In the pale gray light of dawn a crowd of terror-stricken kids stood about the hole and peered in at the cow, who seemed to be standing on her horns. To the dullest mind present it was apparent that dead cows have no value, while live boys must look to their future. Therefore, since the Wilson cow was dead and buried, all but the covering up, there was no sense getting her out and creating needless sorrow scenes among the women and children at the mouth of the pit. So we filled in the shaft without pausing for breath, and took the oath of secrecy on a tin dagger above the unmarked grave of that careless but worthy bovine.

Of course, the widow missed the cow, and a lot of diligent, self-sacrificing boys were willing to give up their studies and help the widow's sons seek that which was lost. The board of directors, to a boy, responded nobly, and for weeks parents wrote excuses to teachers on behalf of the cow. Singly and in groups the reformed coal diggers spent whole days in the bosky dells and sylvan glades adjacent to Mud-

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ville, carrying popguns, lunch and angle worms in tireless search, but so far as I know the cow was never found.

At the same time the mishap at the mine thwarted my career as a mining promoter, and I'm glad of it. The love of fishing acquired and fostered during the futile probing of the Mudville Cow Mystery is now the one solace of my declining years. I had rather fish and lie than be rich. One day, perhaps, in future ages, excavators will come upon the skull and bones of a prehistoric Mudville man buried sixteen feet under ground. Should this narrative be preserved, it may aid the archaeologist.

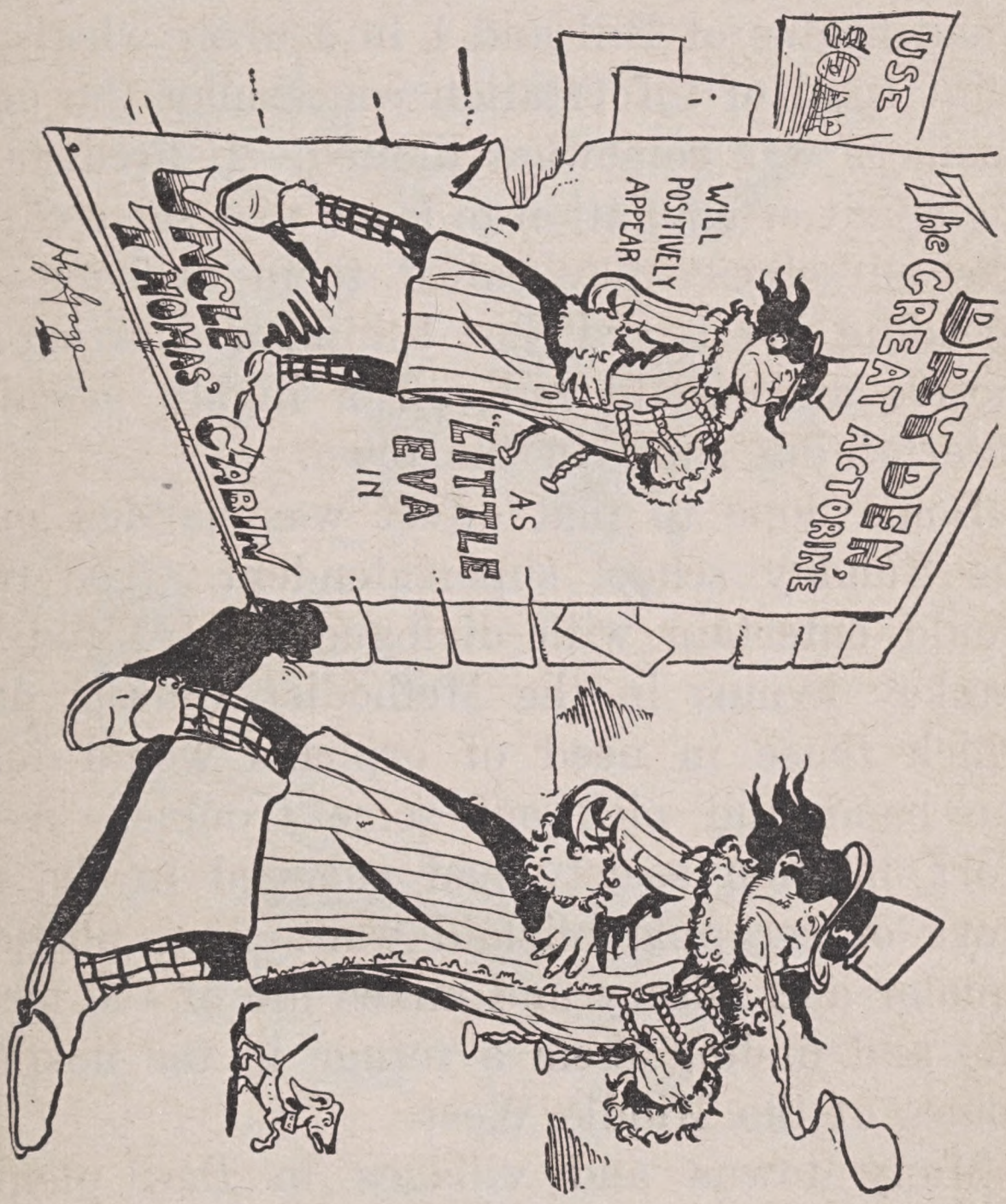
CHAPTER III.

How His Longing to Become a Great Actor Gave Him Some New Views of Life, and How He Didn't Go on the Stage.

Before leaving Mudville behind in this series of confessions it may be well to tell of the only time I ever bulged with longing to become a great actor and wear a fur collar on my coat. My earliest impressions of the drama, which hinged on Orphans and the gay butterfly life they led, broke out in me at that uncertain age when infants are first addicted to thoughts. Every kid at some time or other maps out a stage career.

Ridiculous as it now seems, I fairly pined with desire to shine as an officially declared orphan and be given away to some kind family after doing jay towns in a special car. My brother Bill shared this lofty ambition. We both wanted to become orphans and win renown on the lyric stage, and would have done so, perhaps, had not Bill crabbed the proposition. Never let relations in on any scheme dear to the heart. They'll queer it either through stupidity or pure cussedness.

The heralded approach of one carload of or-



WE BOTH WANTED TO BECOME ORPHANS AND WIN RENOWN ON THE LYRIC STAGE.

phans, assorted sizes and sexes, shipped out from the slums of New York to Mudville, Ill., for distribution among childless Christian homes, set the small brains of Bill and I in a dizzy whirl. Our joint fund of information concerning the orphan business was somewhat limited. It fired us with the spirit of emulation to learn that some children like ourselves—they called them orphans—were speeding Westward, ho! behind a snorting locomotive and would pull off a highly moral and entertaining show in the town.

Some dope to that effect was handed out by the Sunday school superintendent. The troupe would entertain with dialogues and Moody and Sankey hymns in the Methodist church, during which those in need of orphans would inspect the band and pick out some trouble. A New York mission society had engaged in the noble work of scraping mislaid waifs from abodes of squalor and misery and mixed ale of the metropolis and finding them a refuge in the hospitable homes of the Middle West.

Many towns and villages in that plenteous region threw open their doors to the little strangers. Car after car did the mission send out, until thousands of firesides and reform schools reared refractory monuments to forgotten dead in distant burial grounds. But the supply far

exceeded the demand. In time the tide of Eastern orphans flowed elsewhere, but not until Mudville had done its duty by listening to a Moody concert in Sankey repertory and promptly adopting the entire batch.

Pending the arrival of the private car and its distinguished contents, me and Bill talked in our sleep, mostly about orphans, and dreamed night and day of what we should do when successfully embarked upon a similar career. The theatrical features of the business alone appealed to us—the wild, tumultuous ride in the cars, the street parade behind a band and the plaudits of admiring congregations. Bill was stuck on doing a blackface turn, while I held that a genteel song and dance in pink velvet knee breeches and flowing cuffs was the only strictly proper specialty for star orphans on the road.

This point was still unsettled when the talent arrived one sharp autumn night, and me and Bill, quite purple with ingrowing excitement, set off to see the show. We wore our Sunday school regimentals, and, busy with the thought of a glorious future, ran all the way to the church, except for a brief halt, occasioned by Bill. Before starting he carefully entombed both arms to the elbows in his trousers pockets. Thus we sprinted along side by side, as broth-

ers should, until we struck a crossboard sidewalk, which sometimes flew up in sections and smacked people in the face.

There I trod on the end of a loose plank the fraction of a second before Bill arrived at the other. His toes caught and forward he plunged along the raspy boards on his tender frontispiece. The slide peeled a wide, thick strip of skin from his forehead, nose, lips and chin, and also ruffled the epidermis on his wishbone. Had my brother a flat face to start with there wouldn't have been any of it left. Bill's hands, being safely stowed in his pockets during the mishap, escaped injury.

When we reached the church the tousled, blinky orphans stood in a sort of minstrel first part, singing their young lives out. There was no applause and neither did I see any bouquets passed over the footlights. It was a bum show from a spectacular view. The little band was in charge of a tall narrow man, the pallor of whose face was heightened by the inky blackness of his beard. At the end of the first song he handed each child a voice troche and gulped one himself. I attributed his bleach to the troches, but more likely basket lunches and blue mass pills had much to do with that drumhead complexion.



SINGING THEIR YOUNG LIVES AWAY.

For some reason the show fell with a D. S. thud. It must have been on account of Bill, who certainly did not appear at his best. No matter which way he turned, Bill seemed to be peeping roguishly out from behind a blood-red post much too small for him. And the pine splinters sticking to his tear-gummed cheeks did not enhance the boyish beauty of my only brother. When the adopting exercises opened two or three women turned Bill down—said no doubt his parents were murderers and that the police of New York had done the worst thing possible in shipping him out West.

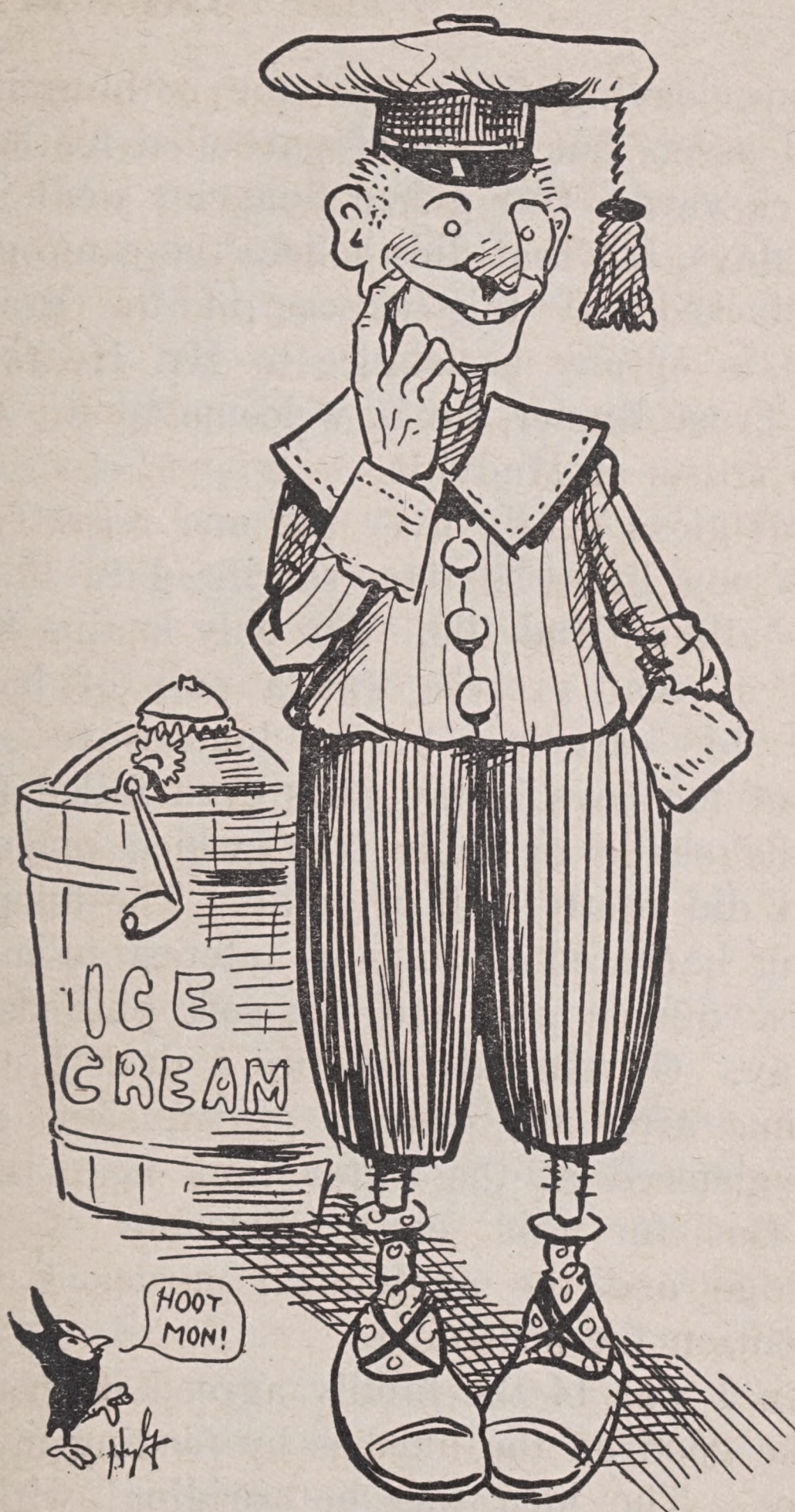
Finally a dear, dim-eyed old lady, who had known him all his life, wiped Bill's skinned nose and offered him a Christian home and burial of the same kind in case he needed one. At that he got mad and swore out loud in the Methodist church, thinking he had a right to do so because we were Presbyterians. I chided Bill with a left hook, and when the sexton got to us we were locked in a brotherly clinch under the pew next to the pulpit. The chill night air of the street killed the last theatrical germ in our systems, and so far as I know, Bill never made another attempt to go on the stage. Neither did I.

One of the male orphans who lodged in our

midst was a born financier, being, quite likely, the unclaimed progeny of an Eastern captain of industry. That he missed the Wall street training of his ancestors was plain, for the first dash into the realms of trade landed him in jail. Had the boy remained in New York and been brought up in the way he should go, its dollars to breakfast food he would now be at the head of a trust. He had the merger principle and he knew how to corner everything in sight.

This orphan was adopted by a Christian family and he used the piety of those foster parents to cloak his vile conspiracy. A little Mudville man, who desired merely to live, opened a little restaurant. Every night or so the orphan descended on the home of the restaurant man and stole a chicken, which he sold, through an accomplice, to the caterer. With the proceeds of the sale the orphan feasted on fried chicken at the cafe next day, paying for the same with the coin the proprietor had coughed up for his own poultry. Besides the chicken, the villain absorbed vast quantities of mashed potatoes and gravy, bread, butter and liquids, for which the caterer had paid out money to people who did not dine there. And for every cash meal the orphan got one on credit.

There was but one result. The restaurant



ONE OF THE ORPHANS WAS A BORN FINANCIER.

blew up, leaving the proprietor nothing in the way of assets but a pile of parboiled feathers in the back yard. Our gifted financier went in for thirty days, but that didn't help the caterer. He was plucked. If this expose of the grasping orphan is of any assistance to Mr. Hearst, the noted Trust Buster, he is welcome to it. There are no trusts at Mudville.

I will gloss gently over the one regretful period of my life—the time sacrificed in the academic halls of Mudville. The only lasting benefit gained at that process was a pair of bowlegs caused by carrying heavy lunches to school. Some of the boys in my class even failed to impair the shape of their legs, which makes me think I did pretty well after all. The temple of learning harbored nothing of interest to me, except my dinner pail and the soft pine desk of that day. On the lid of many a desk I carved my name after the manner of transient guests who registered at the water tank near the depot. But for this early amassing of useful knowledge and the anatomical curves I would not mention the schooling.

When I was 14 the family agreed it was time to make good on the lunches by feeding my own features. The idea was not original with our folks. It has been worked before. As under-

study to a fat iron moulder I joined a get-rich-quick concern that paid me \$3 per week for ten hours' toil per day, right off the reel. All I had to do was fashion moulds in sand and pour hot metal into them. Easy money. It isn't every country boy who picks up a snap. Some of us are exceptionally bright in the matter of avoiding the gilded goods.

For three years I did blackface turns in a pile of black sand, learning the trade. Not a few of the cast iron stove legs I built when a boy are still leaving footprints on humble kitchen floors—enduring tributes to my budding genius in the gentle craft of moulding. Whatever bad breaks since made in other lines cannot wipe out the fact I was a fair to middling moulder at the finish.

Those were happy days in the foundry, because I had not learned to loathe the perverted genius who invented work and forgot to take out a patent on it. Being an enthusiastic kid, I carried home bags of sand and moulded things—mostly lead nickels—in the cool of the evening. But there was no demand for that sort of coin, and I closed up my mint at the suggestion of the village ice cream man, who had a pull with the constable.

Ambition stirred me, too, for I hoped to be-



I CLOSED UP MY MINT.

come a Foreman some day, and sit for hours on a nailkeg, thereby staggering common workmen with the belief that I knew so much about the trade it made me ache to carry it around. That dream was only a pipe which soon went out, but my name appeared in the directories of several large cities linked in small type to the words, Iron Moulder, and the street numbers of fierce boarding houses. So I am not utterly unknown to fame, after all, a feeling shared by the man who has once seen his name in print, though the occasion for it be nothing more than a Delinquent Tax List. If we are to have greatness thrust upon us, nothing can stop it.

While the majority of moulders are steady men with large families and other minor troubles, a hobo mechanic now and then fell off a passing freight train and asked for a job in our shop. This struck me as an ideal existence, skating around the world with a Union card, unhampered by care or baggage, in search of a fresh sand heap. Like the tramp printer, the moulder carries little more than his hands and trade; the shop supplies the rest.

One white-haired ruin who lingered for a grub stake at Mudville had wrestled with a touch of jimjams in most manufacturing towns of note

on the map, and had not yet wound up his itinerary. To me he was a regular Christopher Columbus of a moulder—a man to emulate in all save the flowing bowl specialty. Drunk or sober, his only enemy was the shop foreman as a class, and, for the life of me, I couldn't see why because that hoary old hobo was such a nice man.

In course of time the foundry and the village became too tight for me. I felt like a No. 10 foot in a No. 8 shoe, and imagined I had corns on my intellect. They say that is the way of all young fellows, in whatever walk of life, who are full of tabasco at the start and think they can bat .300 or better in the big League. So at soft seventeen I slipped my cables and set forth to ebb and flow on the tide of events like a waterlogged corncob in a dead eddy.

CHAPTER IV.

At the Age of Seventeen He Cuts Loose Into the Wide World, as Seen in Omaha, and Buys an Oyster Stew.

Kidded along by that sublime faith in humanity common to extreme youth and the purchasers of gold bricks, I cut loose at the age of 17 with the unknown world as contained in Omaha, Neb. What I knew of the iron moulders' trade absorbed at Mudville, Ill., didn't pain me any, and the prospect of not finding jobs most anywhere never touched me. Had I desired to procure employment things might have been different.

Moreover, I carried a package of hot air in an unsealed envelope, presenting Master C. Dryden, Esq. My strictly original To-Whom-it-May Concern was compiled by the village postmaster, an elderly, one-legged gentleman, who did not train with my gang; hence he could safely say I was a loo-loo both in and out of the foundry. He did it in elegant Youth's Companion language.

Besides this valuable asset I rated a \$2 trunk made of some kind of bark which had worm holes

in it. The outside was armored with the very best wall paper of a subdued yellow pattern. On the inner side of the lid appeared the portrait of a bloated Cherub wading around in a bum bouquet that barely came up to his waist. The trunk had a lock which yielded readily sometimes to expert manipulation of a tin key, but I relied more on a safety device of my own, passed twice around the middle and tied in a hard knot. This idea has since been infringed by persons lacking original thought.

The pedigree of the trunk is thus recorded here because it soon eluded me, and many years elapsed before I owned another. Eternal vigilance is the price of trunks, and likewise valises, among the poor and foolish. The mere fact of going to bed in order to place anything of value under lock and key did not, in my opinion, class the trunk as an also-ran. My position in society seemed more firmly established when I raised the lid and looked at the Cherub. In time a fellow can do without baggage, when he gets trained down to it.

So it came about that one winter day, with the trunk masquerading as baggage and me bumping the red plush in a varnished car, we bore down on Omaha. En route through Iowa I studied the whisker exhibits installed on de-

pot platforms, there being nothing else worth looking at. The leading export of the State at that time was Prohibition literature, while the inhabitants raised whiskers for home consumption. Also, I observed experienced travelers in the coach drinking from bottles. These alcoholic festivities made me feel like a four-flusher. Having failed to provide a bottle of my own, I looked for the conductor to flag me at every milepost, on the ground that I had made a false start. That he tolerated one so remiss in his duty to society amazed me.

Even now, after a lapse of twenty-five years, this problem racks and puzzles. Why will the man who spends a decade at home, never thinking of liquor, load up with a quart canteen and souse himself silly on a forty-mile ride? Search me. Does the motion of the train arouse latent thirst, or does the gent think the neck of the bottle protruding from his raiment brands him a traveler of world-wide repute? Funny, isn't it, what muffs you meet while flitting from State to State, either on foot or among the late Mr. Pullman's plush.

Early on the morning of the second day the train reached Omaha and allowed me to mingle in the fierce metropolitan whirl. I left the trunk at the depot for a look around before doing any-

thing rash. It was great—the air of being a gay young man about town, strutting proudly along paved streets. Most of the people looked like Employes, and I was glad fate had carried me to the right place. There was no reason why I should not become an Employe and write to my friends at home letters bearing the postmark of a large city. The growth of this idea made me chesty. I chucked caution to the winds and decided to risk eating something, even before making my debut as an Employe.

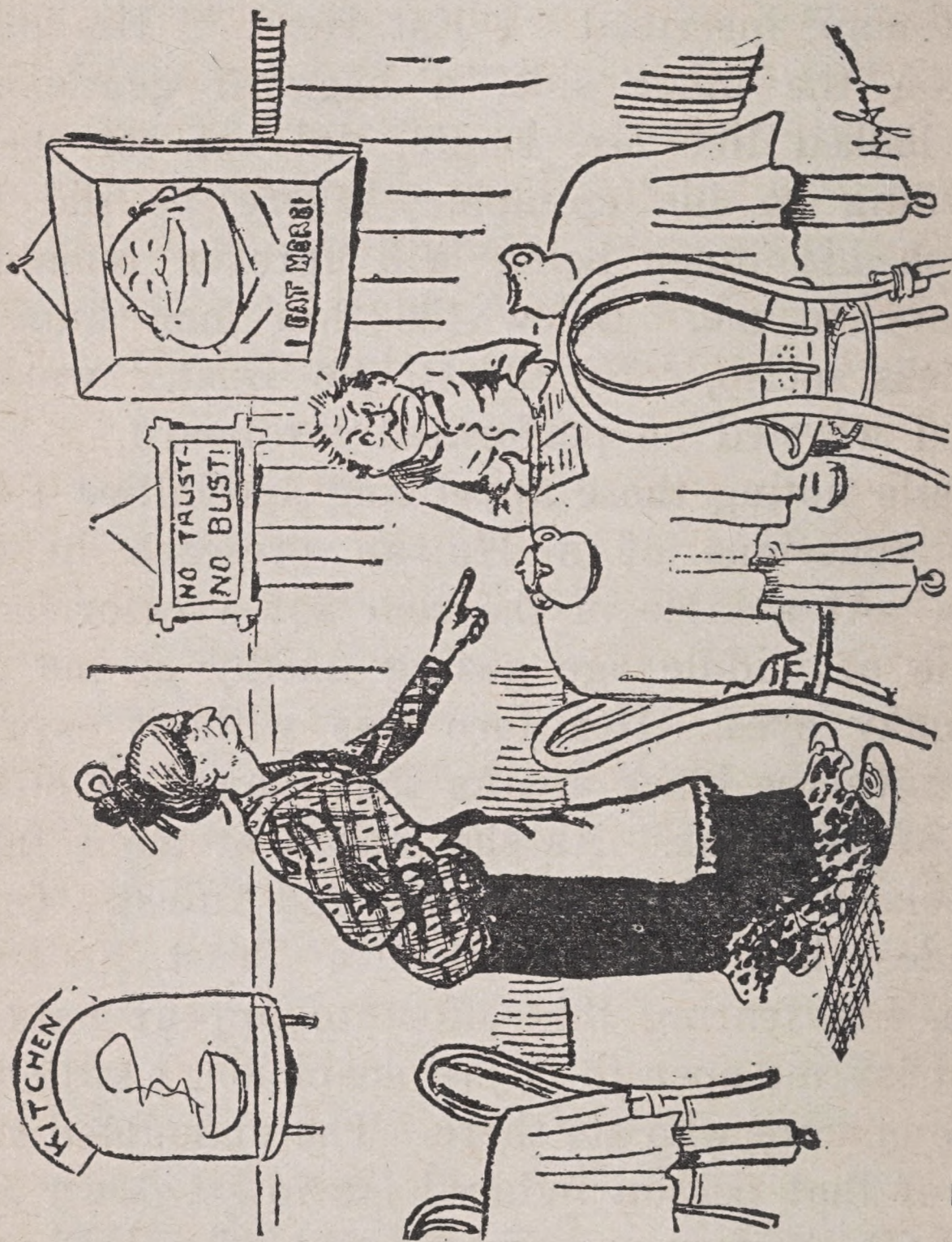
On the rounds of the town I had located in a side street a swagger cafe, bearing this sign: “The Delbeano; Mrs. J. Bunk, Prop.” At the curb stood an inverted wooden wedge in blue, adorned with this legend: “Meals 15 Cents and Upward,” which direction, I have since learned, is, or should be, the natural course of meals taken at that price. In the show window a small pink china pig was mired to its knees in a plate of uncooked beans—a subtle lure set by Mrs. Bunk to entrap the Boston tourist.

On pushing open the blue door, a bell tinkled above the portal, and I glanced back to see who was ringing it. The interior Delbeano was a gaunt room harboring a few tables and a port-holed partition at the back, through which the ambushed cook fired victuals at un-

wary patrons. There were two vivid works of art on opposite walls. One was the likeness of a fat man, inscribed "I Eat Here." His partner on the other side, a haggard gentleman, who looked like Mr. Dante, did not eat there, according to his epitaph. Where he did replenish his inner being will forever remain a mystery to me. Below the thin man hung a business motto, "No Trust, No Bust," worked in red worsted on perforated cardboard.

While noting these appetizing specialties I became conscious of a Human presence in the room. At a table in the rear sat a razor-faced female of middle age gazing fixedly at me out of snaky eyes. Her face was without expression save the black sparks that glowed at either side of her beak. As she looked at me I tried to look in another direction, and failed. Once I made a bold point at the No Trust, No Bust poem, but fearing this effort to appear natural might lay me open to unjust suspicion, I switched to the epicure who ate there. The undoubted success of that person induced me to sit down and open a bill of fare which resembled a ball programme minus the lead pencil.

Pretty soon the lady of the house came over, placed one hand on my table and the other on her hip, meanwhile piercing me with her gimlets.



TO SAVE MY NECK I COULDN'T THINK OF ANYTHING BUT OYSTERS.

Once I glanced up, and she merely pointed one untidy finger at the bill of fare. To save my neck I couldn't think of anything but stewed oysters, the only hot food ever served at the Bon Ton Restaurant in my town. The wits were scared out of me, and still I didn't know why. Finally I said "oysters" in a voice inaudible to myself. Had I been a man of brains and wide experience in dining out, it would have been Ham and Eggs right off the reel.

Aiming her face toward the rear, Mrs. Bunk yelled, "One stew!" and then leisurely placed some tools and a dish of cold slaw on the table. Meanwhile, no sound had come from the kitchen. The order was not bellowed back in true metropolitan fashion. In a little while Mrs. Bunk strolled into the culinary works and instantly there issued the stealthy rattle of pots and a sound of some one raking the fire. Soon the dark-eyed lady emerged wearing an air of extreme abstraction. She went to the front window, shifted the pink pig to an easier position among the beans and gazed into the street. Having me in her toils, that siren of the West worked her little game to the limit. Once she did face about to shriek, "Hurry up that stew; the gent's a-waiting!" No response.

Once more Mrs. Bunk ducked into the kitchen: again I heard the sneaky rattle of pots and beheld

her skinny hand when she slid the bowl upon a shelf in the open partition. Moreover, I recognized the voice when she stepped back and shouted, "Stew r-r-ready——take it away!" Again she came forth in a walking trance and moved about, brushing phantom flies off the tables. All of a sudden she saw the bowl and made a dash for it, and as she sped by me the swish of her starched skirts sounded like splashes of rain against a window.

With the stew in front of me and that pallid flim-flammer seated in her original chair, the picture of unconscious virtue and innocence, my first feeling of fear gave way to indignation bordering on wrath. Did she take me for a lobster? Well, I should hope not; but all the same she had me going for a while. Whether or no the lady kept a cook didn't matter three hoots in the hot place so far as I was concerned. I never had monkeyed with oysters save at church sociables at Mudville, where everything was square and aboveboard. To find that passive bivalve used as a medium of deceit annoyed and disgusted me. And the bold trick of that brazen Mrs. Bunk bred in my tender bosom a distrust for the sex which endures to this day.

The oysters were good. After throwing in the warm poultice, I produced a roll fit to choke a canary bird, gave Mrs. Bunk a scornful look, and

the price, and went out the blue-front door never again to darken it.

It was a long while before I got over the jolt produced by the unparliamentary conduct of Mrs. Bunk. Why should she act that way? Food ever has been and always will be the same to me, whether prepared by chef, proprietor, general manager, cashier or floorwalker, so long as the viands are properly cooked. The world was new to me then and everybody and everything in it strictly on the level until I bumped into Mrs. J. Bunk, of Omaha, Neb. By that one false stroke she forever queered my faith in females and the sincerity of their motives on any proposition. Whenever the gentle passion flickered in my heart, which it sometimes did, there came a warning vision of Mrs. B. and her bunco oyster stew, and I at once grew cold and frosty toward the sex. Can you blame me?

No one ever saw a male caterer pull off any such fool performance; it isn't in him. Man is prone to pride in duality without duplicity on the side. Witness scores of little eating joints in every city—mere slits in the wall, mostly. Row of stools at one side of a counter; range, grub and gear on the other. A fat slob of bilious aspect, in cap and apron that used to be white, cooks and washes dishes in full view of his victims and glories in

his versatility. Sometimes the dew of strenuous endeavor mingles with the cuisine, but what of that? There is no attempt to deceive, to create an impression of absent quantity, and the entire process is conducive to calm serenity of mind and unimpaired digestion, for a few years at least.

I have made much of this boiled oyster incident because, coming as it did at the very threshold of my youthful career, it put me up in the clock for the time being. There was I, a lonesome boy, far from home, willing to be a friend to anyone who would befriend me, and dependent upon the labor of my hands and feet, provided I hit it right. The first human with whom I came in contact was a woman who should have been a mother to me. Instead, she handed me a gold brick with a spoon in it, leaving me a melancholy prey to suspicion and moody distrust.

The proper study of mankind is man; it is the women who keep us guessing.

CHAPTER V.

He Takes up His Residence With His Boss, an English Molder, Who Goes on a Wild Shopping Expedition and Then Tries to Freeze Himself To Death.

In the course of one day I recovered from the jar occasioned by female duplicity in the restaurant; forgot all about it in the great good fortune of becoming not only an employe, but a Boarder in a large city like Omaha. That was hustling some for a half-baked kid away from home the first time. My job lay in a foundry on the outskirts of the town, and the boss moulder, moved to pity by my youth and innocence, took me to live in his own select family at the rate of four ace notes per week.

My roommate was the Irish gentleman who chopped up and melted the pig iron at the foundry, and we were very good friends indeed. When we entered the boudoir together it was necessary for one of us to crawl under the bed, in order to make room for closing the door. Still, I enthused over my advancement in life. It isn't often a mere boy can become a Boarder and send out 20 cents' worth of laundry nearly every week.

Next to politics and the practice of law foundry work is the dirtiest job I know of, but the money is clean, and the moulder carries with him that respect which is one reward of honest effort. Moreover, the unplugged pores of the worker in molten metal filter his conscience. He can sleep at night and eat several pounds of liver and bacon at 5 o'clock in the morning. To be sure, this talent doesn't make him rich. He seldom endows colleges and race tracks, but he is healthy and happy, and that helps some.

The reason I'm able to blow so much hot smoke on this subject is that the iron foundry was my Alma Mater. My education—good enough what there is of it, and plenty of it such as it is—was amassed in those institutions, scattered over an area extending from Maine to California and from Canada to the Gulf. At one time all foundries looked alike to me, and it was a source of great pleasure and some food to be identified with one. Any old building will do for a foundry.

Broken walls and roof and windowless windows for smoke and heat to escape in summer and to admit the cold in winter. Clammy earthen floor, piles of black sand, huge gibbet cranes, with rasping chains and open moulds; great pots of liquid iron swing in the air, spluttering furnaces that shoot constellations of hot stars and sulphur fumes

The Bread Wagon

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into the dull atmosphere, heat that cracks the skin, explosions of gas and choking vapors, half-naked figures groping and steaming—hell with the lid on.

So fervid is the zeal of youth that all this was but the limelight of fame to me, and the dirtier I got the more popular I was with myself when visiting friends or the owners came in to look at the employes. Sometimes I wondered what those persons would say if they knew I boarded with the Boss. But that was too much to hope for so early in the game.

From candle light in the chill winter morning until casting time in the evening I moulded the iron framework for modern school desks, then coming into vogue. Thus did the memory of precious hours wasted at school come back to me, and I shoveled sand with increasing ardor to make up that lost time. The man next to me worked under a crane, the gearing of which did the heavy lifting. He made large iron arches to support the whale-back masonry in sewers, and I envied the greater quantity of sand he handled, with the expert aid of a Polish helper.

Frequently when visitors were around I went over and leaned on the crane in picturesque attitudes and a pair of overalls, just as if the hoist belonged to me and was about to strain itself lifting the top off one of my dinky molds. A dopey old



OUR HABIT WAS TO BITE OUR MONOGRAMS IN THE PIE CRUST.

age makes me long for the foundries of my youth but, alas, they are gone. —Once I gloried in my open pores, but now I beef because they boost my laundry bills.

Not the least exciting items in my curriculum were the home and social sides of life in Omaha. I found both pleasure and comfort in the home circle and plunged into all the gaieties that came my way. The foreman, with whom I lived, was an Englishman, and his three sons had followed in his footsteps to the extent of being English and molders. One of the sons—a boy of my own age—had trouble with his vocal chords. He thought he could sing, which suspicion was shared by the entire family.

At noon we all went home to dinner. For that meal the mother invariably set out to each man a robust English meat pie, or pasty, baked in a crust. Our habit was to eat all we could, bite our monograms on the top crust, and inherit the same pasty for supper. So thoroughly was this system maintained that during a period of four months I do not recall a single fight at supper. Each boarder got what was left of his own pasty, besides other things, and if he didn't care for the pasty it could be placed on file and carried over to another meeting under the head of unfinished business.

In other ways this good wife and mother knew

how to make home attractive. She held the finances, laid in the provisions and kept her husband at home on Saturday night by a scheme more fascinating than any yet touted on the Woman's Page. On Saturday night she gave him a dime for a shave, and when he came back with a manicured face she set him down to a small keg of beer in the kitchen. The keg was all his. Many a night I loitered with him until the keg yielded nothing but bubbles. Beer did not appeal to me then, but words of wisdom from the lips of that master-mechanic held me to a painful seat on a little stool close by the stove. He talked shop, and I liked that. Attired in shirt sleeves and slippers the old man sat stiff-backed and alert, with the keg lying on a chair in front of him. One hand held a short stemmed garbage burner, and in the other he supported a half gallon tin pail with one horny finger hooked over the rim. His patient wife stood by bearing a fistful of pipe lighters made of twisted paper, for the oracle was too busy to strike matches. For hours he drank from the pail and told stories of shops he had bossed, of strikes and people he had licked, and of his early days in England, all of which was of massive interest to me. If, by mistake, he carried the pipe to his face the alert wife stuck a paper roll into the stove and gave him a light. After one puff the

pipe was forgotten, and the tales rolled on until time to fire up again.

When I think of it now that woman was a marvel. She actually delighted in turning the spigot and stoking the pipe, and she knew the stories even better than he, having heard them often enough. Sometimes Mommer coached Popper when he started a yarn in the middle or left out an important paragraph. If it were a funny story she gave me my cue to laugh at the proper place by bursting into a merry peal, whereat the old man's eyes sparkled and he swore by the ghosts of Vulcan every word was gospel truth.

By and by when the keg and stock of anecdotes ran dry she helped her man to bed, where he shook the roof bellowing the songs of his youth until he fell asleep. He had toiled and sweated all week and enjoyed a bully, bang-up time on Saturday night at trifling expense. He got tanked, did all the talking and pulled off a lot of goreless mind fights. And during the spree and when it wound up Mommer knew where he was, just what he had been doing and she had the weekly wage. The lady of the house knew her business.

This system made a deep dent in my tender intellect, and I resolved, if destiny so shaped my future, to adopt it and become an ideal Toiler. But so far there is nothing doing. I don't smoke and

the man in the white jacket turns the spigot for me.

One Saturday night following a snowfall of three feet, and in the height of a blizzard of exceeding fierceness, our gentle landlady sprung a charley horse. Rheumatism put her out of the domestic game for that evening. Popper Thomas said he would take a chance with the storekeepers, so, with a list of verbal instructions covering one hour, he was sent off to do the marketing. With his side whiskers neatly curried and the light of noble resolve shining in his eyes, my boss departed, carrying two baskets and one \$10 bill. It was long after midnight when the shopper returned minus the baskets, but bearing a load that was a peacherino. The success of his expedition to busy marts of trade awoke me and the rest of the Employes and aroused startled interest in the neighbors.

Every item but one Mr. Thomas had purchased was concealed under his belt, yet we knew the exact nature of his contents. His face was adorned with a beatific smile and two unlighted cigars, with red and gold corsets on them. Mr. Thomas never used cigars except on special occasions, at which time he became a real sport. Removing one of the cigars, my boarding boss shifted the other hard apart, and started to warble a plaintive ditty about a blooming sparrow that crawled up a blooming spout.



HIS FACE WAS ADORNED WITH A BEATIFIC SMILE AND TWO
CIGARS WITH RED AND GOLD CORSETS ON THEM.

The lady of the house grabbed the shopper and shook him.

“Is this the way I brought you up?” she demanded. “Trained you by the kitchen fire, with your keg and your pipe. Where’s the money, the groceries and the baskets?”

“There came a blooming rainstorm and washed the blooming sparrow out,” sang Mr. Thomas, with a faraway look in his eye.

“Husband, what did you do with the baskets?” implored the exasperated lady.

“Smashed ’em in a fight,” said Mr. Thomas, emerging from the realms of melody. “Eight scab boilermakers tackled me, and I licked ’em all. And when the blooming sun came out and dried the blooming rain, the bloody, blooming sparrow—”

With desperate fear at her heart, Mrs. Thomas shoved her man into a corner and searched him. He yielded nine cigars—five of them broken and the rest bent—and one half pound can of salmon, with a picture of the fish’s face on the can, like that of the man who makes the talcum powder. In a dim way Mr. Thomas had thought about us while shopping, and the salmon was to tide a household of twelve over a frozen Sunday in the wilds of Omaha. He was a good provider.

It was much too much. Mrs. Thomas gave vent

to a cry of rage and despair and threw the can at her husband's head. Her opening shot was wide and high. The can crashed into a pictorial Family Tree on the wall and jarred three generations from the branches. This was doing pretty well, as the slaughtered relatives belonged to his side of the house. A return shot by Mr. Thomas, whose aim was not steady, broke the tail off a plaster of paris pug dog viewing the carnage from the mantel. Whoever got the can first had the next throw. Five times the deadly canned fish hurtled through the windows, but as the outside shutters were closed, the combatants got their ammunition back by reaching into the shattered panes.

In the midst of the battle the woman fell back on her wrongs and burst into noisy tears. That was Popper's cue, and, in a voice that dulled the storm outside, he said he was a ruined mechanic.

"Disgraced and bulldozed in my own home, what have I to live for?" howled Mr. Thomas. "Nothing whatsoever. I'll end it all!"

Tearing off his coat and hat, the outraged parent and provider, pale with the resolve of death by his own hand, lunged out of the house and slammed the door.

"Help! Save him—Lewellyn, come back!" wailed the wife. "Oh, he's killing himself. Help!"



WE FOUND MR. THOMAS IN A DRIFT, SURROUNDED BY A BLIZZARD.

All hands hustled to the rescue. The gentleman who boiled the pig iron, two moulders boarding there, one son-in-law, three grown sons and myself comprised the party. We found Mr. Thomas standing in a drift surrounded by the blizzard. One leg, slightly in advance of the other, was bent at the knee, and his arms were folded across his chest. In the ghostly light of the storm he resembled Mr. Washington standing in the bow of the boat the night that hero crossed the Delaware. Snowflakes falling on Lewellyn's hot bald scalp melted, trickled into his hair and froze. His flowing side whiskers retained the snow, with lace curtain effects, until his face presented a bird's-eye view of a parlor-window.

"Don't touch me," Mr. Thomas said, in hollow accents, as the rescue party closed in. "I'm freezing myself to death."

"Oh, Lewellyn, don't do it," begged the wife. "Come in by the fire, like a good man."

"Never!" hissed Mr. Thomas. "I freeze to a corpse right here. Farewell."

Turning so that the blizzard smote him in the teeth, the suicide waited for the end. I was appalled, never having witnessed violent death in any form. But ere his gentle spirit fled two sons fell on Popper from behind. The rest tackled him all over, and in a few minutes the back yard

was cleared of snow and Mr. Thomas. Snatched from the brink of the grave and bestowed by the fire, with the loving arms of his wife about him, Mr. Thomas shed some sloppy tears.

He had been cruelly abused in his own home, but bore no malice. Forget and forgive was his motto, and Lewellyn made good by falling asleep and forgetting that he ever lived. All this happened so long ago that I forget just what did become of the can of salmon.

CHAPTER VI.

This Time He Attends a Polish Wedding and Meets a Lady With a High Instep—Some Observations on the Use of Box Cars When Traveling.

Social diversions other than being a Boarder in the home of my Boss were open to me at Omaha during the merry winter season. I was a popular young fellow in my set; so one Saturday night I cut out the keg and shop stories to be among those present at a Polish wedding. Up to that time I never had witnessed a marriage ceremony, but was more or less familiar with some of the dire results.

Murder, failure to provide, suicide and alimony I knew, often followed the golden chime of the wedding bell; but that was the fault of the newspapers. They had no Advice to Lovers, no department of Health Stunts for Girls and How to Manage Husbands in those uncouth days. The high contending parties knew little of each other's moods and temperaments, and so rushed blindly into compacts productive of much woe. Thanks to the benign ideas of modern journals and the

industry of their matrimonial dope compilers, we seldom hear of troubles in that line. All hands now live happily ever after.

The gentleman who took the count in this instance was an honored member of our staff in the foundry, and the only Pole in the bunch. With keen insight into the social requirements of his set, Mr. Blevitsky pulled off his nuptials on Saturday night. This is an open date in the work-a-day world, leaving guests the whole of next day to sleep off the effects of weddings and other functions.

Mr. Blevitsky was a nice but somewhat unhealthy looking young man. He had an abundant crop of pimples, a nose like a window awning and no chin to speak of. I often thought if Mr. Blevitsky would mobilize his pimples in the right place he could build himself a pretty respectable site for the knock out blow. For days prior to the ceremony, and while toiling in the shop, he did nothing but laugh. What it was about I never did learn. No doubt Mr. Blevitsky knew his part. It behooved any man in his position to lay up laughs against a time when this form of diversion becomes naught but a melancholy memory.

My unfortunate shopmate perpetrated his wedding in a saloon in the Polish settlement. There

was nothing to distinguish the saloon from places of similar resort, which are built by the mile and sawed off in sections to suit the needs of publicans, grocers, shoe dealers and haberdashers in new towns. Mr. Blevitsky chartered the place for a long term of hours and installed a band consisting of two cornets and one slide trombone. The happy man had served one wedding breakfast, dinner and supper, and had set out the sausage and ice cream for another breakfast Sunday morning when the police felt obliged to be among those present.

The nuptial feast raged all day Saturday and had several laps to go when I butted in at 10 o'clock that night. Yellow lights blinked dimly in the foggy atmosphere and the bridegroom's special band was tooting away on an independent scale. Everything in the saloon was free by courtesy of Mr. Blevitsky. Large numbers of married men were there, accompanied by their invalids, and scores of little children played among the sawdust and cigar butts on the floor. There were young people, too, but I didn't know any Poles or Polish. However, Mr. Blevitsky pressed me to his white waistcoat and treated to a bottle of pink pop in the presence of the multitude, which put me in right with the elite. The



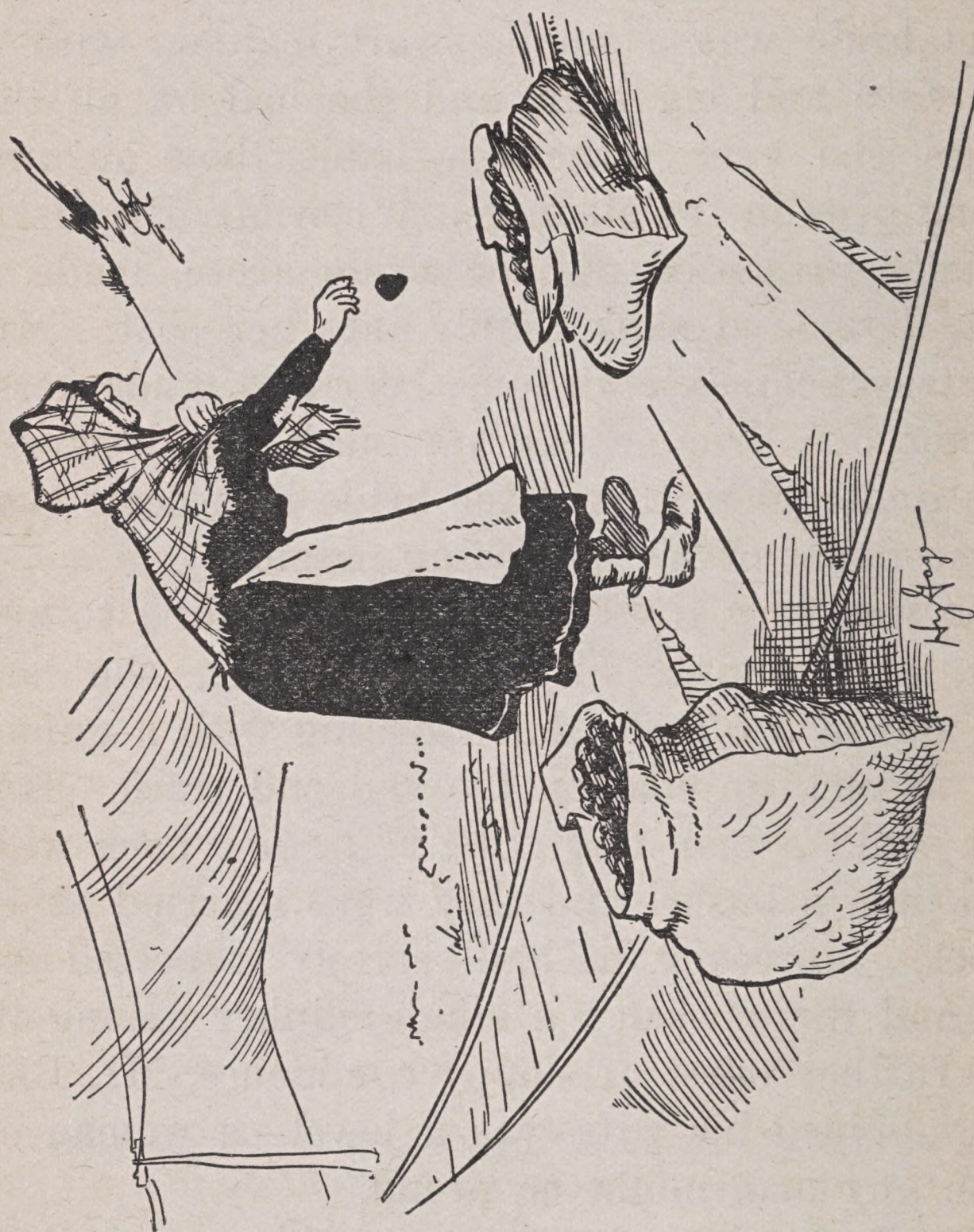
THE BRIDEGROOM WAS QUITE DRUNK AND BLEARY, YET
AFFABLE WITHAL.

bridegroom was quite drunk and bleary, yet affable withal.

His bride was a small, swart maiden, with a little face and big hair, and she had on all the clothes she ever owned—a habit they acquire coming over in the steerage. When Mr. Blevitsky formally presented me the bride arose, made a weary bow, and sank limply into her seat. Mr. Blevitsky beamed with love, beer and tenderness. Placing one arm around my neck, he drew me aside and told me about the bride in accents that left no doubt of his absorbing passion.

She was very tired, he said. According to her wont, and against his express order, she had gone out at 5 o'clock that morning with a gunny sack to pick up coal on the railroad track. But what could a man do? She had come back with more than a bushel and they were married at 10 o'clock. Moreover, he had secretly inspected the coal and there wasn't a single clinker among it. In a further burst of sloppy confidence, Mr. Blevitsky opined his wife was a jewel—a woman of whom any man might be proud.

Everybody danced, after a fashion, and then sidestepped to the bar the minute the band gave out. Mr. Blevitsky superintended the whole business and sopped up most of the loose liquid on the counter with the sleeves of his wedding trous-



SHE HAD GONE AT FIVE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING TO PICK COAL.

seau. He was the life of the party. For mine, I rubbered and soaked up impressions that cling to me still.

Along toward midnight I became absorbed in a bean-colored young woman—to her own notion the happiest one in all that glad throng. She sat midway at one side of the hall opposite the bar, wearing that expression of proud and defiant agony seen in pictures of Christian martyrs burned at the stake. Her symptoms had puzzled me for an hour or so when it dawned that she was the Lady with the High Insteps. Like a statue she posed—her slippered feet thrust forward so as to star the insteps. The tension in her limbs necessary to arch the feet was so great I could see the muscles bulging under the ball dress, and the loose hair about her temples was submerged in moisture. Many a man has stumbled over the high instep to his everlasting sorrow, but instead of falling in love with that maiden I yearned to hand her a couple of swift kicks on the ankles.

Nature and cramps at length called a halt in this exhibition of maidenly charms. The high- instep lady keeled over in a faint, and the entire assemblage of Poles, big and little, talked at the same time. In the confusion incident to this divertisement a furtive Swede, unbidden to the

feast, drew from beneath his chair an immense accordion and started to drag therefrom a dismal tune. Somebody threw a cream puff which hit the Swede in the eye. The pastry stuck just long enough for me to observe how much the Swede looked like a watch repairer at work, then hostilities became general, and a fusillade of food and furniture put the pacificos to flight.

There wasn't much furniture available for long range fighting, so the combatants drew on the larder. The three Polish musicians and the Swede mixed it hand to hand with their instruments, and the guests, hurling victuals toward this common centre, soon involved the whole company. Mr. Blevitsky, with a boiled goose in each hand, battled nobly for a cause shrouded in some doubt. It was time for trouble, and solely on that account the bridegroom sailed in and did the best he could.

When the lights were all knocked out, the fight shifted to the sidewalk, and was still raging when the police got there and cracked a lot of skulls. The Swede escaped, and the Polish orchestra was among those locked up. It is ever thus. The man who butts in and makes trouble for others manages to slip out unhurt. Still, Mr. Blevitsky's wedding was a huge and unqualified success. They took nine stitches in his scalp. And the

lady with the High Insteps never knew she had put her feet in it, so to speak.

Early next morning, impelled by that morbid curiosity ever dominant in the student of human moods and passions, I strolled past the scene of the late nuptial disaster. There wasn't much doing, yet I felt repaid by a glimpse of the saloon proprietor wrestling with the aftermath. Mounted on a stepladder and armed with a putty knife, he was scraping lemon meringue pie, layer cake and cheese from the building front, meanwhile discoursing to himself in quaint Polish accents.

It may be fitting to observe here that while social gaieties epidemic in Omaha at that time were not so recherche as similar affairs at Newport and on Fifth avenue, they were not without interest to the police. At one they batter heads; at the other the cops repel souvenir seekers who would rip the garments off the bride or bite chunks from the iron railings in front of the church.

The only place a fellow can get wedded without police surveillance is in one of those spots untouched by the blight of civilization. Be he millionaire or mutt, this getting married is a dangerous operation, which should only be attempted as a last extremity when ill or out of work. In time I may lose my number and decide

to pay some good woman a salary to make trouble for me, but that possibility is too remote to worry about.

After the wedding I applied myself to moulding with renewed industry. One of my first plays was to pick out a preceptor—a sedate and finished mechanic of mature years, whose mode a youngster might copy and thus become perfect. Mr. Spruce, champion all-round sand pounder, the man who made the large flywheels and dry sand cylinders, filled the bill to my notion, and I copied him. In two months I was a second edition of this Royal Arch moulder in mechanical grace, style and execution. I even spat like Mr. Spruce.

Anything he did I did, and felt I couldn't go wrong. Mr. Spruce saw he had scored a touchdown back of goal with a lobster, and the knowledge pleased him, for he hypnotized me with tales about an engine bed plate he once cast in Sacramento that weighed sixty-four tons. Helpers hoisted him in and out of the sand mould with a derrick for a couple of weeks, he said, and when the plate was cast they had to tear the shop down to get it outside.

That job placed him in the front row of the peach class, and I begged Mr. Spruce for his photograph. What Henry Irving is to the stage

butler this master moulder was to me, and I fairly worshiped the sand he handled.

One evening after work Mr. Spruce, being a fatherly man with a good heart and kindly impulses, asked me to his home to supper. As we left the shop on the outskirts of the town a freight train came along. We climbed to the top and rode a half mile or so to the place where Mr. Spruce got off. Instead of descending the iron ladder and swinging to the ground after the manner of brakemen, he moved that we spring to the roof of a lonely box car standing on a parallel track and descend at leisure. I said all right and he led the way.

Anybody but a lobster in the can knows that a brisk run on leaping from a moving train is necessary to maintain a dignified equilibrium, but I was in the clutch of a master mind. Two seconds after Mr. Spruce hit the roof of the stationary car he was due to jump off at the far end, going full speed. He arrived on schedule time and so did I, one lap behind. The fall on the frozen ties below telescoped Mr. Spruce's spinal column, and I broke my own nose and three of his ribs plunging down on top of him.

Thus did an iconoclastic box car, painted red, shatter my first and only idol. Mr. Spruce went to the hopsital and when my nose subsided so I

could see around it I pulled my freight for the warm belt in Dixie. We never met again. Since then I have traveled on the inside, outside and underneath box cars without a chaperon, and never got hurt. This mention is made not as a proud boast, but as part of a mottled career.

CHAPTER VII.

A Chapter in Which a Weird Ride on a Mississippi Steamboat and a Companion in Distress Figure.

Owing to a hitch in the programme, the good people of Memphis, Tenn., were not quite ready for me when I arrived there on the inside of a train during a tour of the world in 1880. The Mayor had mislaid the Key to the City, and the iron foundries hoisted the cold wave flag. Not a single foreman wanted a boy to raise, and before a week ended I sassed myself for sidestepping Omaha. There I had a job and friends, and entree to the whirlpool of social gaiety as portrayed by Polish weddings among the shop hands. Memphis was chill and sloppy. All hands turned me down, and my money sped swiftly, like the last car deserting a fat lady who is too excited to whistle.

When the hope of becoming an Employe at Memphis blew up, I hung about the levee and looked at the river. Being too old and cowardly to turn pirate, I affected the stream for pastime only. The season was late in winter, and the



"ANOTHER BOY HELPED ME LOOK AT THE RIVER."

unlaundered Mississippi rippled along replete with chunks of honeycombed ice, the soil of adjacent States in solution and an occasional streaky steamboat. Another boy, who said he had been bottling wine in California, helped me look at the river and the ice, and shared the frosts that nipped us in the town.

We met by the river, he and I, and there was much that bound us together. Carl was but a detached unit in this great problem of ours involving 80,000,000 fatheads, and some that had subsided. I knew him little more than a week under adverse conditions, yet even now as I gaze upon the restless push, hustling and striving for the dollar and the quick, unsatisfying lunch I often think of that sad, hungry boy alone on the bum until he met me.

Carl was one of eleven, he told me in our calmer moments. I, too, had sprung from poor but prolific parents, and an unconscious bond of misery linked the busted wine bottler to me in a sort of brother stunt. Each was welcome to what the other didn't have.

Against his will, let us hope, Carl had costumed himself like a German comedian in a little fried egg stiff hat, short trousers, low shoes and white socks. Whenever we ranged about the town Carl's socks awoke languid interest in our

movements, and that was the best we got. Like myself he had abated his finances, quitting a good job for the excitement of hunting another in a strange place, and was then eager to starve to death in a warmer climate, provided he could reach one.

I coincided in this view, and we pooled an issue.

The German comedian roomed under a high sidewalk in the purlieus of the city, and took Window Board standing in front of a restaurant that displayed steaks, chops and delicacies of the season behind thick glass. I occupied apartments in a river front hostelry at 15 cents per day, which did not include meals. These Southern cities know how to boom prices to the embarrassment of Northern tourists. My \$2 bark trunk that had set out from Mudville with me was at the hotel, and I assayed about \$1.40 in white metal—all that lay between us and the next town, which we agreed should be New Orleans. The only tip either of us had on that place was the distance, which is said to lend enchantment at a high rate of interest.

So Carl and I plotted to beat the river out of a pass to New Orleans, and herein is that scheme laid bare.

For 90 cents I purchased a black tar-paper

valise with tin hasps and trimmings. In size, shape and general bearing this purchase looked more like a gas meter than anything I can now recall. Into the valise we put a chunk of bologna sausage bigger than a bootleg, a bag of raw onions, and stuffed bread in the remaining space. My last cent went to victual the cruise of at least a week. The comedian voted the bologna into the grip, and I prescribed the onions, having read in nautical tales that the onion is the best preventive of scurvy known to mariners.

To properly dress for the part, I put on my shop clothes, including a blue flannel shirt, and stowed the rest of my outfit in the faithful bark trunk. With the help of Carl I carried the trunk to an express office and shipped it C. O. D. to New Orleans.

An immense stern-wheel boat—the U. P. Schenck, from Cincinnati—offered inviting exit to a warmer clime. She carried furniture on the hurricane deck, baled hay on the lower, or boiler deck, and nails in kegs in the hold.

Carl and I thought the hay looked good to us, so one evening at dusk, when no one was looking, we burrowed into the new mown. A row of stanchions from the boilers forward carried a canvas-covered steampipe to the engine aft, and

the hay was piled over and around the pipe. We crawled into this steam-heated flat, taking the food hamper along, and settled down for a nice, quiet voyage.

Things went pretty well until the gentleman who chaperoned the hay sold us out. He had a vulgar habit of telegraphing ahead to riverside dealers, who purchased hay in bunches. Negro roustabouts with cargo hooks disturbed our privacy at all hours of the day and night, digging out consignments of baled hay. Layer by layer the coons peeled our happy home away. Further and further aft we burrowed, until at the end of the second day, we fetched up against the engine room bulkhead. There was no time to gnaw through that obstacle, so, rather than jump overboard, Carl and I admitted that we were discovered.

A red-necked mate who had killed a dozen stowaways, he said, laughed at Carl's white socks, after which he took us before the purser, in the white and old gold cabin on the upper deck. In that gorgeous tribunal we heard our doom pronounced. It was either pay fare to New Orleans—\$3.50 each, deck passage—or get off at the next landing. I glanced ahead through a window at the next landing—a muddy, oozy



“A RED-NECKED MALE WHO HAD KILLED A DOZEN STOWAWAYS.”

stretch of Arkansas shore, clouded in misty rain and sloping away into a swamp.

Night was coming on. Here and there a live oak tree wearing long, gray whiskers—Spanish moss, I believe, is the tonsorial name—stood like a lost Rip Van Winkle in that moist and forbidding wilderness. The only living being in sight was a rickety Uncle Tom seated on a bale of cotton in a two-wheeled cart, waiting for the steamboat. His mule, apparently, had died standing in shafts. And that was the place for us to get off, not.

My heart ceased to beat, and I could hear a funny clicking noise in the comedian's neck, like a duck choking to death.

"Mister," I said to the purser, "we haven't any money, but wealthy relatives will meet the boat at New Orleans and pay all charges."

The purser peered out of his little box office, laughed brutally and said he couldn't do it. Too many bums tried to work him on that gag.

"Well, I'll put up my baggage for security," I pleaded.

"Let me see it," said the purser without looking up from his work.

When I requested Carl to go below for the valise, he seemed about to throw a fit. He was even more of a Dutchman than his costume

would indicate, and the way our affairs were being dented all but paralyzed him. All the same, the valise was bought with my money. Carl held an honorary membership in the sausage and onions, but I had a right to invest the gas meter as I saw fit, and he knew it. Capital is mighty and will prevail.

During the absence of Carl I gazed at the negro porter, who stood guard—gazed at him with an intense and overwhelming Rock-of-ages cleft-for-me expression. If I did get by the purser with my little game, it was up to the porter to either make or break me; but if he saw or understood the black man made no sign. He kept me guessing.

Meanwhile the purser was busy writing in his coop, which had a little window ledge like a theatre office, opening into the main cabin. When my limp partner returned I took the valise, stood in the middle of the cabin and held up our only asset for the inspection of the purser. It looked pretty brisk and shiny in the half light, and my soul was uplifted when the man in the coop said:

“All right; give it to the porter.”

Carl's eyes bulged, and he would have wept, only his mouth monopolized all the moisture in his head. He thought only of the sausage and

onions, without a spark of pity or compassion for the nervous strain I had undergone, saving his life and mine up to that point, with the porter yet to hear from.

"There's a little light lunch in the grip I would like to take out if you don't care," I ventured to remind the purser.

"I don't want your miserable lunch," he gruffly replied, at the same time handing over a couple of deck-passage checks he had made out for us.

Having so far succeeded as a strategist, I circled about with the valise and placed it on the deck directly under the office ledge. The purser couldn't see me unless he rose up and hung himself across the opening, and I saw no reason why he should do that, being, as I have said, a very busy person. When I opened up the meter the flow of gas choked the purser; at least I heard him cough and splutter. Quickly passing what was left of the bologna, bread and onions to Carl I motioned him to sneak, and then, looking the negro porter firmly in the eyeballs, I handed him the empty 90-cent tar-paper valise and offered up a silent prayer.

He took that hollow, scented mockery in his strong right hand and actually walked lopsided out of the cabin lest the purser might

be looking. Noble negro—fairest of his sex! I never saw my meter any more. Neither did Carl. By the time this transaction ended we had taken on the bale of cotton and were steaming away from that sloppy Siberian shore—from the whiskery live oak trees, Uncle Tom and his moribund mule—\$7 to the good in trade on a legitimate deal. Little did I think at Memphis about laying up a cheap valise against a rainy day—and the drizzle was fierce.

Carl and I huddled together that night in a coil of rope on the dismal lower deck devoid of sheltering hay. Ever and anon Carl ate a slab of sausage, with a side of raw onion to ward off scurvy. My mind was too full for food. I thought of Abraham Lincoln and the great and lasting good the Great Emancipator had done for posterity on the pork. Next day I hunted up the negro porter and told him, with vast pride of voice and gesture, that I hailed from the same state—Mudville, Ill. He didn't know what I was talking about.

The rest of the route to New Orleans was fraught with hardship and hunger. Long before our commissary exploded damp weather coaxed out on the bologna a crop of soft blue whiskers half an inch long, and which greatly enhanced the appearance of the menu. How-

ever, beauty of that sort is only skin deep, and by peeling the bolonga we got the true meat and flavor. When the last fragment was gone, the midnight lunch of hardtack set out for the negro rousters kept us alive. Like alley rats we sneaked from gloomy recesses to the table back of the boilers, grabbed some crackers and crept away to nibble in the dark. Water is included in a deck passage, which is a good thing to know should you ever decide to take one.

At New Orleans I went to the bad proper, and, single-footed and alone, pulled off a march to the sea that knocks General Sherman's little stroll silly.

CHAPTER VIII.

A Notable March to the Sea which Eclipsed that Made by General Sherman, and Some Pious Thoughts for the Wayfarer.

For about two weeks, at New Orleans, I tented on the old camp ground, a spot much esteemed by soldiers of fortune, nee bums. These tents are immense tarpaulins, with piles of perishable freight for centre poles. No unsightly sheds incumber the miles of wharves and levees at this Southern port of call for tramps and ships, and they all find berths.

The tarpaulins do double duty as sheds and also lodging houses for whites and blacks alert enough to elude the watchmen. River odors ooze up through the cracks of the wharves in the humid night, and the air-tight canvas covering shuts in a soothing bouquet of tar, green hides, antique vegetables and the spices of Arabia and Africa. There is no color line on the old camp ground.

A special providence, said to watch over idiots, drunken men and boys, provided me with shelter, but I had no meal ticket. And yet I can truthfully assert that manna still falls in the wilder-

ness for children of hunger, doubt and despair. Overripe bananas from the West Indies drop off the bunches in transit from steamer to wharf. Thus did I feed on manna that fell at my feet, for I always was right on the spot. It was necessary to be ever pecking, like a sparrow in the park, in order to keep the wrinkles out of my midriff, and I had little time to hustle for other business.

As at Memphis, nobody wanted a cub moulder. Neither did the ship captains desire a commodore or dishwasher when I offered to sail the raging main with them. On many occasions I asked for a job as porter at wholesale houses. The usual reply held that my color scheme didn't fit the theme, and it was a case of back to the banana belt in the wilderness for me. All I owned enveloped my small and enfamined person. Fifteen hundred miles lay between me and my be-it-ever-so-humble. My \$2 trunk, shipped ahead from Memphis, was in hock at the express office. Next door I had pawned by last asset, a wheezy silver watch, and I still hoarded the few dimes, lest accident befall the inward-bound banana fleet. Even then my intellect, such as it was, ranged far ahead, sometimes.

Since the ships declined to carry me down to the sea, there was nothing left but to beat the

THE ALLIGATOR SOMETIMES DISPUTED MY WAY.



ninety-nine mile stretch of railroad between New Orleans and the Gulf. I performed this clever feat by limping along the track in light marching order, and thus got ahead of J. Pierpont Morgan for the first and only time in my life. I'll bet it would sting him some now if he knew it. Three days and 15 cents' worth of ginger bread were consumed in this spirited dash to tidewater and a new life on the rolling deep. My only preparation for the journey was to take a farewell peep at the trunk in the express office and time the start by the three golden balls next door.

Nothing that Mr. Morgan has since handled in the way of stock was watered like this road. Much of the route is wormed through cypress swamps like a pair of snakes crawling along on stilts. Trains were few and not at all keen, so I ran little danger from that source. The heat of noon late in spring blazing down upon the track enticed the alligator from his winter hole, and he sometimes disputed the right of way on the solid levels. Many a time was I moved to kick a \$30 traveling bag out of one of those sodden beasts, but what's the use? I argued. With nothing to put in it, the bag would merely retard my progress. Sherman's march to the sea was but a matinee stroll down Broadway in plug hat, cane and spats.

The first night out I slumbered fitfully in an abandoned handcar house that stood on piles beside the track. Before evacuating the premises Mr. Morgan removed the floor and three sides. Along the remaining wall he left a board seat about one foot in width, on which the Dago section hands were wont to rest when weary with earning their little old 90 cents per day. On this board I slept, while the Southern star shone in where the roof used to be. Mr. Morgan took that, too. I never learned the depth of water beneath the house, and it wasn't my fault. All night long I dreamed of sleeping on a clothes-line stretched across the gorge below Niagara Falls, and was afraid to turn over.

Thirty miles a day is pretty rapid transit for a fat-headed lobster geared up to jaded limbs and blistered feet, and I had no pacemaker. The track was not ballasted, which fact led me to overlook much of the scenery. At the same time, I seldom missed a tie. The water through which Mr. Morgan's railroad flowed, I have since learned, was the color of absinthe, and I suffered mightily from thirst. Nor was the gingerbread diet any too juicy. At the rate I traveled it was comparatively easy to drop off at stations for the purchase of supplies without fear of getting left.



DREAMED OF SLEEPING ON A CLOTHESLINE STRETCHED ACROSS THE NIAGARA GORGE.

The gingerbread came and likewise went in slabs at 5 cents each. In the seafaring vernacular of that region, the bread was known as the stage plank, owing to its outward similarity to the landing stage lowered from the bows of steamboats. In size, weight, color and shape the stage plank more accurately imitates the bland building brick. While making no special effort to economize, one brick carried me through an entire day. My parched salivary glands, allied to the want of water, rendered eating a positive pain—a condition quite abnormal in a boy. One bite of brick to the mile was the average rate of consumption; and if the Divine scribe who wrote about straining at gnats and swallowing camels had ever been up against the Louisiana stage plank, he would doubtless beg leave to amend, adding, “and stage planks” to camels.

Ever and anon I flagged a sky-blue cistern, built of staves on top of the ground, and lapped up a gallon or so of rainwater with pollywogs in it. Then, like Mr. Christian of whom John Bunyan wrote, I proceeded on my journey, vastly swelled and feeling and looking much the same as a Philadelphia alderman on a junketing trip with the Liberty Bell.

The pious thoughts pervading these paragraphs are not inspired by levity, for I hold all

religions sacred. It is the gingerbread. In the country church of long ago an air of extreme piety could not down the pungent aroma of home-made ginger cookies with which mothers quieted peevish children during a record-breaking discourse. So it is but natural the Louisiana stage plank directs my mental footsteps into the path they trod in youth. Gingerbread never fails to make me pensive and good.

Walking was fairly brisk the second day out, though my slats ached from sleeping on the board in the handcar house. After reeling off about twenty-nine miles I slowed down for the night at a section station bossed by an elderly Italian. His astringent face and battered dialect gave no token of hospitality, and I almost feared to ask for lodging. The boss not only said I could stay, but he handed out, via the back door, a slab of cheese and the heel of a rye loaf upholstered with caraway seeds. Moreover, the kind Italian tendered me the freedom of his sky-blue cistern while I ate his bread and cheese. Anything for a change was welcome—anything that would agitate, antagonize or even enthuse the water-logged gingerbread hoarded up in my system. No wonder tramps get bilious!

For the night the section boss stowed me in a vacant bunk in a sort of barracks where he

housed the hired men. The lawful proprietor of the bunk had gone off to get drunk and make a night of it, but about 12 o'clock, while my racked and weary frame was wrapped in slumber, the drunkard came back and claimed his bunk.

This incident disappointed me in more ways than one. I was a little Blue Ribbon Worker; had attended Francis Murphy's temperance lectures at Mudville, Ill., and signed the total abstinence pledge every night for two weeks under a different name, just to help the cause along. According to tradition, the drunken Dago should have slept in the gutter, and there was plenty of gutter for him, too, in ditches on either side of Mr. Morgan's railroad. But that degenerate boozier raised such a fuss about his bunk, making no allusion whatever to gutters, that the boss came forth with a lantern to look us over.

He didn't seem to think so much of me then, but he was too good-hearted to kick me out into the night, which had turned cold and wet. So, grumbling some, he gave me another room in the hen house. The hens clucked and blinked in the lantern light and coiled their feet a little tighter around the roost, while I huddled down in a corner. Still feeling glad for any kind of

a favor, I folded my hands and started to say "Now I lay me." Then, thinking this might encroach too heavily on the good nature and hospitality of the hens, I burst into a chuckle of laughter all by my lonely in the dark.

That I could laugh at all in those damp and dismal surroundings did much to comfort, strengthen and sustain me. A saving sense of the ridiculous is an important adjunct to the successful hobo. Without it, many of them never would take the road. Instead, they would stop at home and become deacons and trustees and prominent citizens who sit on the platform at public functions.

Early in the morning I took leave of the hens and limped away on the last lap of the journey to the Gulf. The night in the henery had given me bone spavin in several new places, and I quite forgot my original aching joints and parboiled heels. I made a farewell demonstration at the cistern, taking in a supply of water while the boss was looking, but this time he chopped on the bread and cheese. Still I had enough stage plank to carry me through, and the prospect of getting somewhere that day stirred me with unusual ardor.

Which was but natural in one well raised. I desired to spruce up a bit before flashing into

Morgan City. Even the rummiest hobo makes an occasional effort to be genteel and the performance I went through is seldom if ever attempted by civilized persons. It requires originality, delicacy of touch, keen judgment, and a cold, unfeeling heart, all of which I had.

Cutting a long pole from a thicket, I removed my shirt, turned the garment inside out and hung it by the sleeves to the rear end of the pole, which I carried over my shoulder like a musket. Every little while I gave the pole a shake sufficient to agitate the shirt. The only friends I had picked up under the tarpaulins at New Orleans, and which stuck through all my hardships, fell off in helpless platoons on the barren railroad track, a dozen feet behind, as I strode resolutely onward, nor cast one lingering look.

In the course of a few miles, or when I could read my title clear to the shirt, I put it on again and swept into Morgan City, La., with my gills clogged with gingerbread. It was a coarse boast of the railroad that no hobo ever beat his way on that line. Trains were guarded and searched at stations, and any passenger without a ticket was sent to jail. For that reason I did not attempt to ride, not caring to annoy the management, and I got there just the same.

CHAPTER IX.

He Makes His Debut as a Food Passer on a Steamboat and Develops a Taste for Yellow Journalism in His Capacity as a Pancake Editor.

Come to think of it, Morgan City, La., wasn't so much since I had walked three days on a diet of gingerbread and rainwater to get there. As related in the last chapter, my watch and trunk were in hock at New Orleans, and I had strolled away from that town more to elude a menu of cast-off bananas than anything else. Also, I desired a change of scene, clothing, money, work, friends and a few other trifles a soft-boiled brat deemed useful in his business.

At Morgan City a line of vessels running to Vera Cruz, Mex., and Galveston connected with the Morgan Railroad, which I had hoofed a distance of ninety miles. There was one steamer in harbor, the Whitney, bound for Vera Cruz, and she only awaited a flash at me before making an auspicious and dignified start. A huge affair was the Whitney, wide and flat, with a walking beam engine—one of those river relics that burn, blow up or sink as a side issue to

Sunday school excursions. With vague ideas of what might be doing, I limped aboard and asked the first man for a job.

This large, hairy person bossed the genteel pastime of lowering freight into the forward hatch and swearing in a florid style all his own. When I spoke about bounding away on the laughing billows with him he regarded me hopefully and wanted to know if I had a pair of scissors. I said I had not.

“Because if you had you might get a berth down below trimming coal,” he said.

“Maybe I can borrow a pair from the other fellows,” I ventured, “and if you’ll show me how to get down there I’ll try.”

That subtle seaman pointed out an iron ladder leading into the lurid bowels of the ship, and I was making for it when a young man in a blue cap, probably a freight clerk, headed me off.

“Don’t try it, sonny,” he cautioned. “That place would kill you. Nothing but niggers can stand the fire room. See the steward. He might fix you.”

I did see the steward, a fat negro resembling Billy Rice in stage make-up, and he fixed me plenty. The steamer was due to sail in an hour or so with 200 cabin passengers. Seven of the

ten coon waiters had struck and gone ashore because they didn't esteem the Hon. Billy, promoted to chief steward from among their ranks on the previous trip. Each of the malcontents thought he should have won the epaulets. In a tempest of rage, grief and mortification the blighted seven jumped the ship, and, moreover, they boycotted Billy Rice so that all well-disposed coons affiliated with the Food Passers' Union kept away from the usurper in the hour of his greatest need.

The idea of putting to sea with the three black dubs who stuck handling the table service for 200 people filled the mind of Billy Rice with frightful forebodings. He would look worse than the steward on a sampan, and Billy knew it. So he fell on my neck as the savior of his reputation when I said I could handle more cooked grub than any six men, white or black. It was necessary to tell Billy something of a cheering nature in order to debut as the only white Food Passer sailing in those troubled waters.

Under certain stress a fellow is justified in lying, if only for a mere matter of self-preservation. It was imperative the Whitney should go to sea. I had to go somewhere, and, as we needed one another in our business, what was more natural than that the Whitney and I should

form a diplomatic alliance? And yet I was a hollow mockery; or, to put it even stronger, an empty fraud about to bunco a confiding steamboat.

In a hazy sort of way I understood the duty required of me was to dally with real victuals, and I was willing to learn all over again. Mr. Rice was too absorbed in his own troubles to take much notice of my general fuzzy, sleeping-out, rained-on, flea-bitten, half-starved aspect until the steamer was well down the bay. Billy then gave me a lovely white jacket that buttoned up to my chin. After scouring my face and brushing my hair my upper works took on a beauteous form, quite pleasing to behold, until I looked at my feet, which were all to the peacock. My fine feathers drooped and I felt like a bird of low degree among the ladies and gentlemen in gay traveling plumage. However, my mind was not permitted to dwell on the outer man.

It was mid-afternoon when the Whitney cleared and the scant cabin force tackled the prodigious task of laying the tables and serving supper. Billy Rice, his three black food passers and myself toted great loads of dishes from the pantry to the long saloon. This work kept us on the broad jump, but I found time for keen



I CONFESSED TO A FAINT GNAWING IN MY VITALS.

side diversions at once profitable and soothing. Connected with the pantry was the officer's mess room, in which supper was already laid for the dog watch. A narrow table placed against the wall was stacked with cold meats, fowl, sardines, salads and pastry sufficient for five men. In one hour, passing in and out, I cleared that table while helping to set the cabin board. I won something each trip, and sometimes a double portion, devouring pie and smoked salmon with equal eclat while on the double quick.

My fellow food passers regarded me with superstitious awe common to the negro. Billy Rice, though he said little, seemed depressed by the knowledge he had signed and shipped for that voyage a living, breathing famine. My skinny legs were hollow, and I couldn't stop eating until the bones ceased to rattle. Two weeks on a desultory diet of bananas, three days in the dry gingerbread class, and one night and the greater part of the next day at Morgan City without food had geared me up to the mean voracity of a threshing machine. Billy Rice at length viewed my case in a proper light. "White boy," he said, "you shore am hungry."

I confessed to a faint gnawing in my vitals.

"But if you can feed other white folks like you do yourself," the Chief Steward continued, "the ship is saved."

Blushing with pride, I said my aim was to give the passengers a run for their passage money after getting myself filled up. So when I slowed down we spread another layout for the dog watch, and pretty soon a grand free-for-all foray opened in the main saloon.

Waiting on table is easy enough when you know how. Slender maidens with their thumbs immersed in hot soup have been seen to glide serenely and never spill a drop, but that was done on an even keel. Aboard a rolling ship it is different. There the food passer requires a steady brain and eye, sea legs and the trick of juggling perfected to the highest possible art. All these qualities I lacked, and it wasn't long before the passengers and even B. Rice discovered me to be a four-flusher of the first water. The cabin resounded with the wails of the maimed and hungry.

I made a hideous mess of things on my station—anoointed myself, the cabin and its contents with soup and gravy; took an order from one person and served it to another—ever and anon chipping chunks off the gilded wainscoting with my moist and burning brow. Because of my color, perhaps, and the manner in which I strove to please the more fastidious, our passengers vielded to the not unnatural belief that

I owned the ship. One red-headed pilgrim to Vera Cruz addressed me politely as Mr. Whitney, to the annoyance of my black contemporaries, and as Mr. Whitney I was known throughout the voyage.

Somehow we struggled along and fought that first meal to a bitter finish. I was covered with shame and prune juice and other things, and the grand saloon resembled the lunch hour on a chowder steamer. During a lull in the havoc, when passengers and food passers paused for breath, the ship gave a lurch. She sidestepped on me. I was standing at attention at one side of the saloon. My heels struck the sill or coaming of an open state room door, and in I fell on the flat of my back. The jar rocked the ship and shook a shower of glass pendants from the grand chandelier above the table.

That stunt was the best thing I ever did on any vessel, for the introduction of vaudeville at a critical stage in the tragedy dispelled the dark looks and muttered threats which portended open mutiny. The scalded, gummed and streaky passengers broke into cheers and merry shouts of laughter. They thought I was killed. Even when the white ghost of Mr. Whitney crawled out of the stateroom to haunt them some more the general good feeling was such that no one

thought of reporting to me any incivility or inattention on the part of the waiters, and thereby conferring a favor on the management.

Over night our noble ship wheezed her way into the fussy waters of the Gulf, and in consequence the eating force was vastly diminished. The ill ones seemed glad because we didn't have enough waiters to go round. Less than half the cabin complement appeared at breakfast, and while that meal was on Billy Rice made a discovery which tickled me as well as himself. Wheat cakes are one of the few edibles that will not slop over or spill at sea, and, as our cook made them, the cakes clung to the plates like patent medicine stickers. My career at once took shape.

I could serve the wheats without attracting undue notice, so they promoted me to Pancake Editor, in which capacity I issued three editions daily, with an occasional Fried Egg extra. Thus, in a way, I got a taste of yellow journalism long before my time in Park Row. In a short time I grew quite pert and could gallop into the grand saloon—the hollow of my left arm piled high with little plates, which I shot around the tables after the manner of the fellow dealing poker to experts who desire one card on the draw.

Furthermore, in recognition of my one deep



THE HOLLOW OF MY ARM PILED HIGH WITH PLATES.

sea talent, B. Rice published pancakes for every meal just to help me along, and I'll never forget him for that.

No matter how poor, humble and worthless he may be, a boy will do one thing properly, and if encouraged in that one thing his confidence is established and he eventually aspires to something ennobling and uplifting. Less than two weeks later I earned 40 cents shoveling oyster shells at Galveston, Texas; but, as Rudyard once said, that's another item. Just the same, I look back with pride to my career as Pancake Editor.

All days look alike in the busy routine on board a crowded vessel, and I readily fell into the way of going ship-shape. Food, sleep and excitement soon rounded out the hollows in my boyish cheeks, and Mr. Whitney, with the cares of a large steamboat on his mind, fared well.

One of the black boys gave me a shirt and collar; another trimmed my hair and a passenger, whose heart was large and his feet medium, tipped me to a pair of shoes. The condition of my old ones was wretched in the extreme. Run over at the heel and turned up at the side, they gave my feet the appearance of being set

in italics. These italicized feet always emphasize a hard luck story.

While the ship lay at Vera Cruz they kept me on board to scrub things. On the way back she stopped at Galveston. There I spurned B. Rice, tendered my resignation as Pancake Editor and went ashore to swing Texas around by the tail.

CHAPTER X.

Tells How He Started in to Swing Texas Around by the Tail, and How Some Boyish Dreams Were Dispelled.

For a long while Texas had looked good to me as a place where a boy of moderate industry could pick up a decent income detecting train robbers, bringing them to justice and collecting the reward. At least, that scheme was a snap in the Youth's Detective Series; but once within the Lone Star regions things were different. The only robber I bumped into eluded my vigilance. He found me a tapioca with seedless raisins in it.

One bleary afternoon in March I landed at Galveston, the sole proprietor and manager of \$6, earned as a steamship food passer on a trip across the Gulf. It was my first experience in the food flinging line, and, while the passengers did not get all that was coming to them, I had fared pretty well. The steamer picked me up, a footsore and hungry tramp, at a jay seaport in Louisiana, for the round voyage to Vera Cruz. By the time we reached Galveston, homeward bound, I was fed and rested and chesty. The negro steward who tutored me in food passing



I LANDED IN GALVESTON THE SOLE PROPRIETOR
AND MANAGER OF \$6.

as an art wanted me to linger and be of use to him, but I spurned the proposition, demanded my pay and went ashore. He had a lot to say about ungrateful white bums.

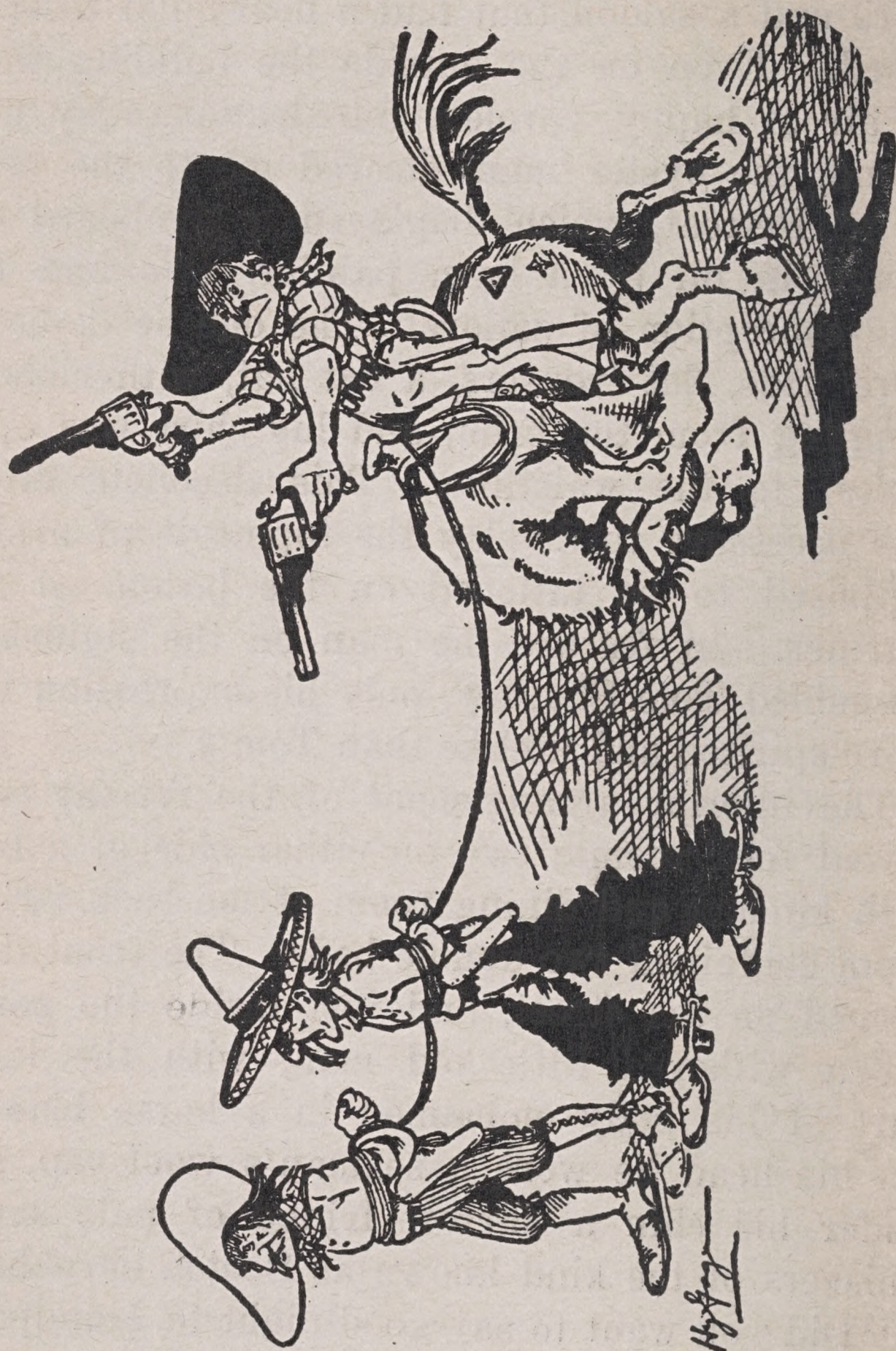
While I didn't look much like a sailor, I felt and acted the part. The odor of dish water and prunes, instead of tar, pervaded my youthful being, yet I walked with a nautical roll, ever and anon giving my greasy trousers a hitch, and squinting up at the sky. For an hour or two I looked about the wharves talking of my travels with oyster openers, crab fishers and unemployed crap shooters, who are to be found in large herds at Southern seaports. That evening I dined on raw oysters at an open-faced cafe built against a wharf shed, and told the proprietor many interesting things about Vera Cruz. My ship anchored three miles from shore during our stay at the Mexican port. I remained on board the entire time, and a dense fog prevailed night and day. Still, as the restaurant man had never been to Vera Cruz, I was able to tell him all he wanted to know about the place.

Being a thorough seagoing person, as I thought, the only place for me was on the water front, so I hove to for the night, at the Mariners' Retreat. This snug haven for sea rovers was a one-story shack squeezed in between a green hide

store and a saloon that had a heavy list to starboard. Even on the outside the building wore an air of happy, careless intoxication. My new friend, the oyster man, steered me to the Mariners' Retreat, which displayed a signboard executed in oil by a barn painter, who had the true conception of sailors. The one he depicted wore wide, flat trousers, a flat hat, with ribbons dangling from the brim, and his shirt was open almost to the waistline. This décollete effect was necessary to display the topmasts of a ship supposed to be tattooed on the bosom of the mariner. In feature the man on the signboard resembled Tom Sharkey, only his expression was more spirited and lifelike than Tom's.

The interior arrangement of the retreat comprised four rooms; two on either side of a hall, with kitchen and dining room at the back. Each room contained two double beds. The front door opened on the street, and just inside the portal sat a withered little old man, with the lower part of his body embalmed in a horse blanket. On his head he wore a seaman's wool cap, and under his chin a narrow fringe of pale sandy whiskers of the kind known as Scotch shrubbery.

"Did you want to say good-night to grandpa?" he squeaked in a ratlike voice.



DETECTING TRAIN ROBBERS AND COLLECTING THE REWARD.

“Who is grandpa?” I asked, wondering if he were a mislaid relative of mine.

“Me,” said the little old man. “Guests must say good-night to grandpa before turning in. It’s a rule of the house. Twenty-five cents. Have you got the money?”

“Oh!” I said, “‘good-night’ means to pay in advance. Sure. I’ve got the price.”

He looked at me sideways while I exhumed a loose quarter from my raiment and placed it on the table. Kicking his thin legs out of the horse blanket grandpa picked up the coin and the lamp and started to lead me along the hall, when he paused as if held up by a sudden thought.

“Have you any change?” Grandpa asked courteously. “So many guests spring large bills on me and I can not go out for change.”

I told him I had \$6 in silver—my pay-day on the steamer.

“How fortunate,” chuckled the old gentleman. “You can break this \$5, if you’ll be so kind.”

Five of my silver dollars were exchanged for the bill, and Grandpa showed me to my cozy apartment in one of the rear rooms. There was just space between the beds for a fellow to stand and peel. Chairs were deemed a needless luxury in the Retreat.

“Now, sonny,” said Grandpa, holding the light in the doorway while I disrobed, “you can sleep on the front side of this bed. Like as not, there’ll be no more guests. And for 25 cents you may have a nice breakfast in the morning.”

With that the kind old man backed away and once more settled down in his horse blanket at the front door. By the light of a hall lamp thrown over the low partition I crawled into bed, first placing my purse in my vest and hiding it beneath the sheet under my shoulders. It was daylight when I awoke, feeling much refreshed. The other bed was empty, but showed symptoms of having been occupied. Hearing a noise at my back, I turned over and found a dark-browed, stocky man, fully dressed even to his shoes, lying on the bed between me and the wall. On seeing me awake the stranger bade me a cheerful good-morning, crawled out and sat on the side of the bed.

“Will you be so good, young fellow, as to lace and tie my shoe?” he added. “I’ve got a lame hip on one side and can’t bend low enough.”

“Certainly, sir,” I replied, willing to oblige the afflicted. “It’s a terrible thing to be lame, sir.”

Hopping out I knelt down to lace the shoe. While at work on that labor of love I was pained

and shocked to detect my faithful vest lying on the floor under the bed. With a horrible fear at my heart I hauled out the vest and found the purse, empty and turned inside out, stuffed back into the pocket in which I left it.

“Look at that!” I gasped. “I’ve been robbed in the night!”

“Well, I declare, if that isn’t so!” exclaimed my bed partner, equally astonished. “This is a wicked town, and no mistake. Must have been the fellows in the other bed. They went out early. I’m glad you don’t suspect me.”

Thanking me for my kindness the alleged lame man limped out of the room, leaving me to wrestle with some afterthoughts. What puzzled me was how the vest got from under my body and took a header to the floor without disturbing my repose. That I had been touched was plenty plain and clear, but when and by whom was the mystery. My pillow was in place, but the lower sheet was gone from my side of the bed and lay in a sort of windrow down the center of the couch. That explained it. The man who slept at the back had rolled me for my roll. By pulling the sheet away inch by inch he caused me to turn the other way in my innocent slumber until the treasure vest was within his covetous grasp. I awoke before he could get away with

the swag and the shoe game was but a cunning subterfuge. He wanted me to discover the looted vest under the bed before he departed and thus divert suspicion from himself. Neat work.

My wardrobe was intact for the reason it was not worth stealing, and I had no baggage. After dressing I went into the hall to confide in grandpa, but he was off watch. In the kitchen I found a good looking but dissipated young man cooking things, the odor of which was maddening to a hungry and bankrupt boy.

“Who runs this outfit?” I demanded.

“What has that to do with you?” retorted the chef.

“Lots,” I said. “They robbed me in there last night—took every cent I had and pushed the bottom of the purse up into the place where the money used to be. There it is. Look at it.”

“Well, I’m sorry for your tough luck,” said the cook in a soft and, it seemed, complacent voice. “I own this place, but sleep elsewhere. The old man you saw last night is the watchman. Did you request him to put your valuables in the safe?”

“No, sir; I didn’t know you had a safe.”

“Then I’m afraid we can not help you any,” he replied somewhat sadly and ignoring the safe

query. "You were very careless, but you needn't pay for your lodging."

"To-night?" I asked, eagerly.

"No, last night."

"Why, I paid for that in advance—said good-night to grandpa," I added, with a ghastly attempt at humor.

The cook laughed, turned his fat back on me and prodded the good things on the stove. He was guying me, and, rather than stand for that sort of thing, I went out and walked around the block. In one respect I was a full-fledged mariner. The sharks cleaned me out the first night ashore, and once more I was up against the starvation gag. Gradually the system by which I was touched unfolded itself. Nothing could have been easier or neater than the syndicate hotel game worked in the Mariner's Retreat.

To begin with, the pirate in the open-faced oyster joint on the water front was the outside man. He did the steering. The cook was the silent partner—paid the rent and served the meals to people who did not sleep in the house. Dear old grandpa, with his cheerful little good-night joke, was a sort of investigation committee. His business was to probe the financial standing of a mariner. Changing the \$5 bill was but a subtle stratagem to get at the size of my pile. And

the quick-witted gentleman with the lame hip was the night operator—the man with the gentle touch—and he was a peach. My poor little roll didn't amount to much, yet the loss of it let me into the details of a syndicate system which doubtless paid rich dividends when real sailors, with deep water paydays, stumbled into the trap.

At that the Mariners' Retreat did not differ from hotels I have since known in New York and at swagger summer resorts. The landlord and his assistants get all your money, but the operation is not so sudden as that practiced on the simple mariner in Texas. And the legitimate hotel man makes a feeble bluff at giving his victims something in return for his genteel mode of piracy.

About the middle of the forenoon, tired, disheartened and hungry, I sneaked past the Retreat. My late bed-fellow, now half drunk, stood in a cocky attitude in front of the place. One hand rested on an awning post and the other on his lame hip. A row of brown cigars protruded from his vest pocket, and his hat was canted over one eye.

“Hello, bub!” the Boss Dipper said in a disgustingly familiar way. “How much did you lose last night?” just as if he didn't know.

“It was my all, sir—all I had in the world—six dollars.”

“Don’t let that worry you,” he said in fatherly accents. “All you can buy with money is whisky and tobacco, and such things won’t do you any good. Cheer up.”

And thus I left him in the enjoyment of his ill-gotten wealth.

On first leaving home I was desirous of procuring employment, so my letter of introduction stated. Now I wanted a job. A swift canvass of the town disclosed but one iron foundry in an active state of eruption. This was an amateur industrial outfit in Class B, resembling a box car with a funnel sticking up at one side. All the same, it starred the name of Vulcan Iron Works on a board longer than the building. There was but one person Vulcaning in the place—a meek-looking man in spectacles, who had the air of a blighted being. He was molding grate bars for the sawmill district, and from the pattern layout I judged that was the chief product.

“Is the foreman about?” I inquired of the Blighted Being.

“I’m him,” he replied, actually blushing. “What can I do for you?”

My needs were soon explained. I told him my hard luck story from top to bottom: How my

watch and trunk were in hock at New Orleans; my tramp to the Gulf; the sea voyage, and the lifting of my \$6 in that pirate's nest—the Mariners' Retreat. Also, I mentioned Mudville, Ill., and the names of the men I had worked with there. He knew one of them, and his heart warmed to me. The sad foreman bustled about, fed me from his dinner pail and talked a blue streak. To one of my youth and inexperience he could unbosom himself and escape ridicule.

“While I’m foreman here,” he confessed, with another blush, “they won’t allow me to hire any one. I do all the work myself.”

“And boss yourself, too?” I inquired, in a burst of astonishment.

“In a manner of speaking, I have my own way pretty much,” he confided. “I do all the work, load the melting furnace, melt the iron and on casting days the owner hires a couple of niggers to help me with the ladles. For years I wanted to be a foreman, and this is it,” he half sobbed, “making these bloody grate bars. Enough to drive a good man daffy. But, say, I can get you a job on the outside if you’ll take it.”

Of course I would, in a minute, so the unhappy boss of himself wrote me a note to the superintendent of the street car system.

“That man Walsh is a friend of mine. I once saved his life and he’ll do anything for me.”

Mr. Walsh read the note and with bad grace, I thought, set me at work with a bunch of Dagoes shifting a section of car track. The road was ballasted with oyster shells, which had to be chopped loose with pickaxes. At the end of two hours of brilliant achievement we came to a switch, and while a couple of Dagoes worked with crowbars for a pinch lift on the switch frog I straightened up and rested my hands on my hips. My spine, too, needed a change of scene. That move was the cue for Mr. Walsh, who popped out from somewhere.

“Say, young fellow,” he growled, “we haven’t work enough, it seems, to keep you busy. Come to the office and get your pay.”

I protested I was only waiting for the bar men to lift the edge of the frog, so I could get my hands under and help raise it, but the highly indignant Mr. Walsh fired me just the same. He could not well ignore the request from the man who saved his life, but there was nothing in the bond to prevent Mr. Walsh giving me the grand bounce on short notice, and I got it. He paid me off with thirty cents’ worth of street car tickets—two hours’ work at the rate of fifteen cents per. That helped some, as there was no “Seeing

The Bread Wagon

Galveston'' car in those days, and I couldn't squander my salary touring the city.

Had the peculiar significance of thirty cents been established at that time I would perhaps have told Mr. Walsh his life was worth just what it cost him to discharge the obligation he owed the foundry foreman. But, alas! I was shy on repartee, the same as other necessities of life, so I hit the trucks of a passenger train to Houston.

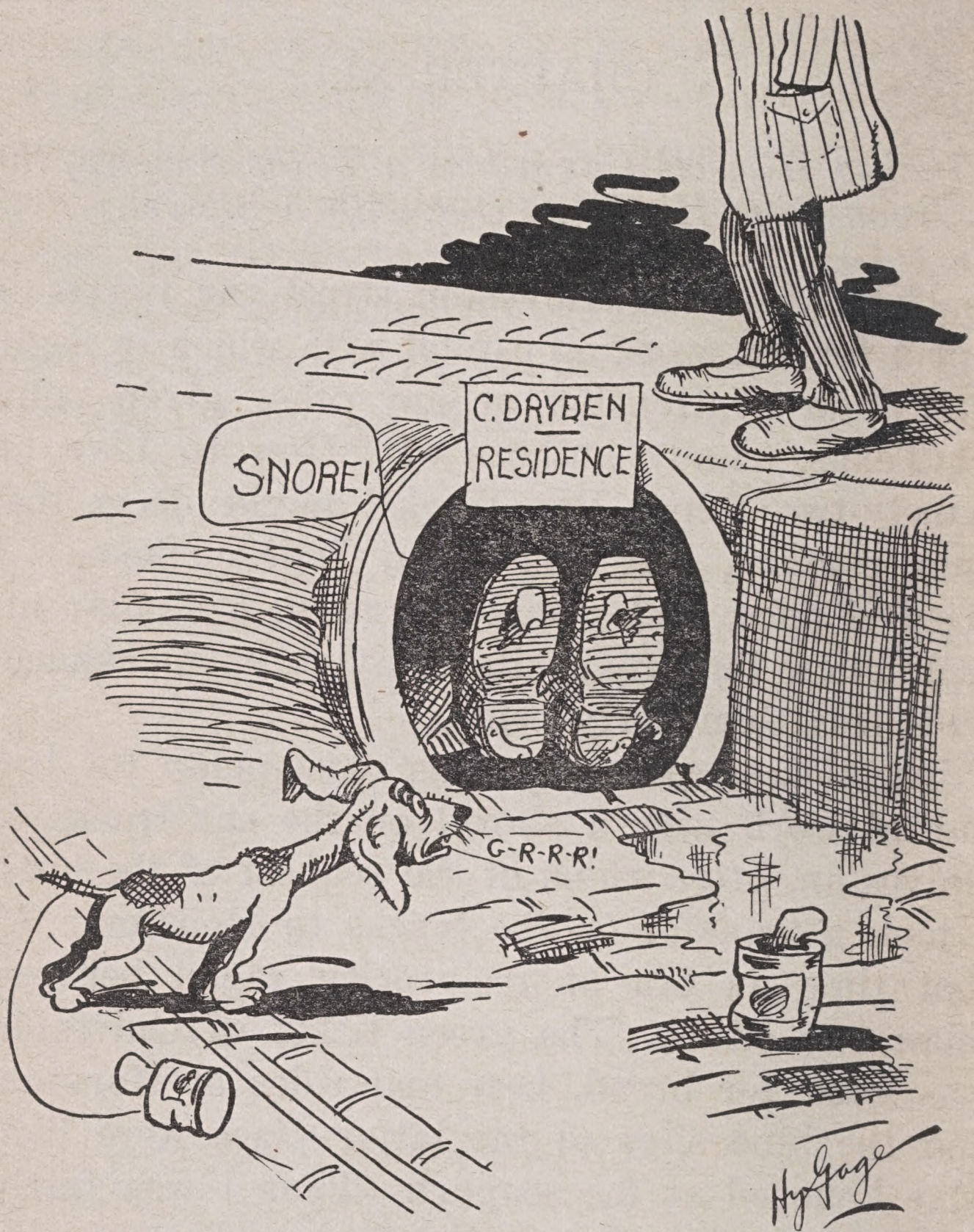
CHAPTER XI.

Finding Himself Canned in a Texas Swamp, the Hobo Digs His Way Out with a Shovel.

Thirty cents in Galveston street car tickets is not a fervent working capital with which to begin life anew at Houston or any other given point in Texas. Lady authors of "How to Live on Ninety-two Cents Per Week" might deem that sum colossal, but don't you believe them. I tried it once, and would not make a similar attempt, now that my habits of living have changed, with less than forty cents.

The tickets came to me as recompense for two hours' work with a shovel on the car tracks at Galveston, after which at the request of the boss, I took a transfer on the trucks to Houston. At that time an era of reciprocity raged between those two cities. The green ticket of Galveston was good for bread, beer and rides at Houston, and the blue slips of the latter place were likewise honored at the seaport. Thus I was fairly well heeled while the six tickets lasted.

Owing to the skinny state of my finances I went back to the stage-plank diet—slabs of dry gingerbread at one ticket each. There always



I FOUND COZY SLEEPING QUARTERS IN A DRY CULVERT

is an abundance of water at Houston, more than was needed to wash down the bread, but I managed to find cozy sleeping quarters in a dry culvert on one of the graded streets. The name of the street has slipped my memory, yet most any boy placed as I was can easily locate the culvert if he needs it, and he doubtless will.

The only iron foundry at Houston had closed down for want of work, and I was about to do the same at the end of two days. But one ticket remained in my touring fund, and I squandered that for more bread. On the morning of the third day I moped around the streets like a hen with the pip. It was raining plenty and I lurked in the shelter of a sidewalk awning, thinking pensively of the flood that by nightfall would be racing through my late dry culvert. The spark of hope flickered but faintly in my damp bosom, when my eye caught a placard: "Men Wanted for the Country: Apply Upstairs." I applied swiftly at a glass door bearing this legend in ornate gold letters: "Mr. Paul Beaumont's Eastern and Western Texas Narrow Gauge Railroad Company, Limited." The name was almost as wide and nearly as long as the railroad, but I didn't know this at the time.

The only person visible in the office was an oily looking elderly creature—one of those vain men,

who suspects that his hair is curly, and does things to strengthen the suspicion. This man's hair was iron gray—streaks of black and white smeared with grease and tousled into the semblance of short curls. The whole effect suggested a mess of fried onions, and made me so hungry I almost forgot what I came for.

“What is it, boy?” the oily man harshly inquired.

“I'm looking for work, sir,” I replied, gazing fascinated at his fried onions.

He must have taken my glance for one of profound admiration. His manner softened, and, after sizing me up, he said I didn't look much like a working man. That wasn't my fault, I said, and then told him all my troubles.

“Poor boy!” he said, in such a sad way I could have wept over my own misfortunes. “Really, you are not able to work after those hardships. Your system is all run down. What you need is some light occupation—a mild diversion, as it were, to take your mind off yourself and tone you up. We have the very place for you.”

“Where is it?” I asked, ready to shed tears of joy and gratitude.

“At our railroad camp in Polk county, seventy-five miles from here. Splendid scenery, nice

surroundings, pure air and fine board. We will pass you out on the railroad, pay you \$1.50 per day and deduct 50 cents for board. The train starts in an hour. Are you ready to go?"

Was I ready? Well, I guess yes. When he wrote out the pass I galloped all the way to the station. I traveled in my baggage and made good time. A little jerk-water narrow-gauge engine and one coach comprised the train, and I took a front seat in the car. The trip to Livingston consumed most of the day owing to numerous stops at new settlements of small and mangy aspect. When the conductor punched my ticket he wanted to know why I went to Livingston.

"To work on the railroad," I said proudly.

"You'll stay just long enough to get back," he retorted, with a brutal laugh.

I didn't understand him then, but later on his meaning struck me in a lump, and the blow was a corker.

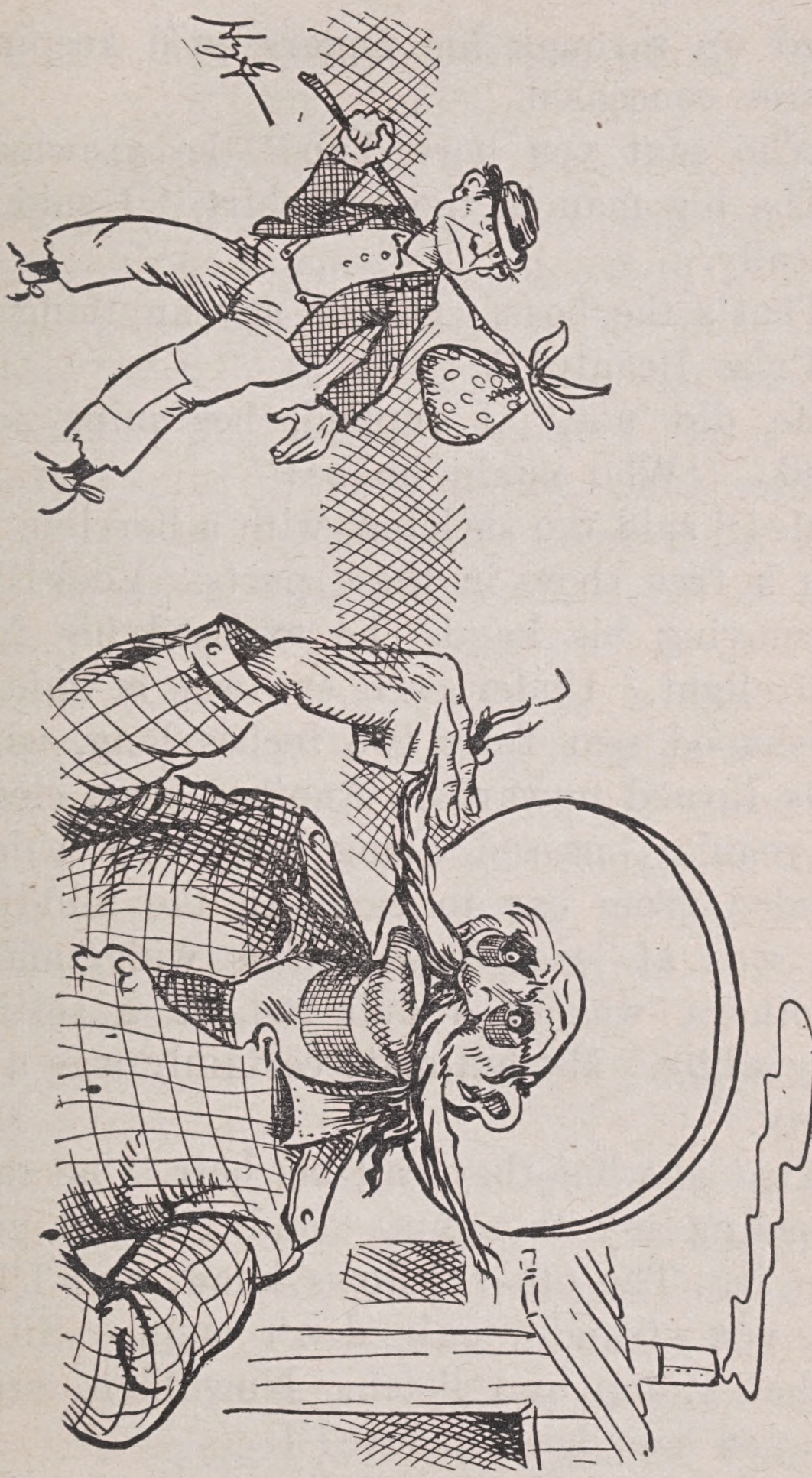
Shortly before dusk we reached Livingston, Polk county, Tex., and halted for the night, as the track ended there. That was the jumping-off place. So far as I could see the bustling city of Livingston comprised much swamp, three box-cars standing on a siding and some tiny log huts in the bushes. In a few places clear of water a fellow could get all the mud he wanted and then

some. I was the only passenger who played the train to the limit, and when I alighted a large man in a red flannel shirt seemed by instinct to know just what to do with me.

“See that cabin?” he said, pointing to a hut at the edge of the clearing. “That’s where you sleep. Now go to the cars and get your supper. I’ll need you in the morning.”

Two of the box cars formed the dining hall, fitted with rough board tables and benches spiked to the floor. In the third car, which was coupled to the others, a dope-dazed Chinaman dreamed he was the cook. Supper being over, the Chinaman brought me a tin platter of cold salt pork and cornbread. I ate the whole business, and would have asked for more only I didn’t know the cook very well. After cleaning out the banquet hall, I groped among stumps and puddles to the cluster of log huts. Camp fires burned in front of the doors, lighting up groups of muddy, shaggy men, who looked like pirates smoking and swearing in the weird glare.

In the doorway of the hut assigned to me, and which stood apart from the others, sat a man of giant skeleton frame, with his face buried in his bony hands. He appeared to be thinking. His huge feet were sprawled out toward a pile of blazing sticks. On hearing me approach he



THE PRIZE BEAUTY

peered up through his fingers, still keeping his features concealed.

“Who sent you here, bub?” he growled.

“The big man in the red shirt,” I said, apologetically.

“That’s the boss. Did he say anything about the Prize Beauty?”

“He did not,” I replied, beginning to feel scared. “Who might he be?”

“Me!” said the skeleton, with a horrible laugh. “I’m a free show in these parts. Look!”

Removing his hands, he exposed his face to the firelight. Under each eye was a wide, crescent-shaped scar fully two inches long, with the points turned upwards. Another scar, clean cut and regular, passed along below his chin and extended from ear to ear. In the middle this gash was at least three inches wide, and, like the others, was of a dull red, in a setting of sickly white. My hut-mate certainly was a Prize Beauty.

“That is what they call me here,” he said, as if reading my thoughts, “and I’ll tell you all about it. The other fellows know, and I’ll give it to you straight, only don’t laugh. Sit there on that stump and listen. Now then, first off, have you ever been in love?”

Feeling it safer to tell the truth, I said that

Mr. Cupid's dart had not yet pierced my tender vitals.

"Don't ever be in love, my boy," he went on mournfully. "There's nothing in that game. I was in love once, and all I got out of it was a face like comets shooting across the milky way. The lady lived in Indiana, and at the time we met I weighed 350 pounds. Looked like a prize Berkshire hog at the county fair. She said she couldn't marry a fat man, so I went in for Anti-Fat. I owned a drug store and kept the stuff in stock. Well, the medicine pulled me down as thin as I am now and left me a holy show. Two pouches of loose skin hung beneath my eyes, like buckskin purses, and the flap of waste hide under my chin would half sole a pair of boots. The lady never would have me in that shape, so I went to Indianapolis and hired a Beauty Doctor to skin me."

"Did he do you up like that?" I inquired in shocked accent.

"Not quite. The job was all right at first. The scars on my eyes scarcely showed, and my neck bore a thin red mark. Looked like I had worn a hat with a rubber band under the chin, kid fashion. The lady warmed up right away, and the love business was booming until I started to get fat. That put an end to love's young

dream and drove me forever from the haunts of females.”

Here the Prize Beauty bent his head in silent anguish, while I sat and shivered and waited for the end.

“The flesh kept piling up on me in spite of Anti-Fat, or anything else. That drug had lost its grip, and I soon went up to 300 pounds. The loose skin the Beauty Doctor cut away left my face cramped for room. I couldn’t shut my eyes, and the wide hem taken up under the chin drew my head forward, till I could see nothing but the ground with eyes that never closed. On top of this awful affliction the lady I loved sent word that she heard I had lost a nickel in boyhood and was out looking for it. At least she suspected me, because I walked with my head down and eyes wide open.

“Her cruel sneer stung me, mostly in the places where I had no skin. I sent a farewell note to the fickle maiden, sold the drug store and flew the coop. Worry and despair pulled the fat off me again, but the strain on the cuts was so great they stretched and never closed up. I’ll never be any better,” he added sadly. “This is a good place for me, and here I stay. Time now to go to bed. Climb in.”

Vastly moved by this story of beauty and

spurned affection, I wriggled into a bunk that contained the same kind of bedding they give a horse. Lodgers in railroad camps furnish their own bedding, and I had forgotten mine. The night turned cold, and I would have suffered much but for the heat generated in my system thinking of the oily-haired villain at Houston who had steered me into that den of luxury and mild diversion. At daylight all hands were routed out to a breakfast of fat pork, dried apples and coffee. The Chinaman was at his worst in the coffee line. After breakfast I was handed a shovel and loaded with the gang on to a string of flat cars pushed by a dinky engine. In a narrow cut of yellow clay, which the rain had washed upon the track, the workers were dumped off into the ditches on either side of the road and ordered to shovel mud. The water covering the mud had frozen a thin sheet of ice over night, and when I jumped I bogged down to my knees in the chill mass. I looked at the other fellows. Light occupation seemed to be their regular business, so I bored in and dug with the best of them.

The tops of the flat cars on which we piled the yellow muck stood level with our faces. In order to discharge a shovel load it was necessary to bang the shovel edge on the car. The effect was like dropping a decayed pumpkin off a tall

building. Gobs of smeary yellow goo squirted in all directions. It lodged in my eyes, ears and hair and plastered my clothes from top to bottom. After loading the cars the engine towed them to another place, where we pushed the mud overboard and went back for more. When the noon hour came I resembled the statue of some great General in the modeling stage. All I needed was a sword in place of the shovel. The only spot clear of mud was my mouth, and I filled that with fried pork.

Work in the afternoon was much the same, except the late March air was not so keen. The supply of mud held out. In fact, it oozed into the cut as fast as we hauled it away, and I beheld enough gentle diversion amid pleasant surroundings to be the death of me. The Prize Beauty was not at work that day. I found him in the cabin door after supper feeling of his scalped face and looking at the fire. He asked me how I liked the place. I said I'd go back to Houston on the train in the morning.

"Not this time, bub," he said, kindly. "It's seventy-five miles to Houston, and the rate is ten cents a mile. They pass a fellow out here and he must pay his way back. That takes \$7.50. The least you can do it in is eleven days, including two Sundays, for which board is charged.

Nine days' work, if it doesn't rain, bring you \$13.50, and eleven days' board, at 50 cents per, comes to \$5.50. Deducting \$7.50 for railroad fare, you may, if you live, return to Houston in about two weeks with a net profit of 50 cents."

The facility with which the Prize Beauty did mental arithmetic in and around my affairs made me ill. But he was right. They had me canned in the swamp, and the only way out was to dig it with a shovel. I went to bed in my muddy clothes a blighted, blasted, ruined mechanic. Anyhow, I could eat while working out my sentence, and that was a better prospect than walking back to Houston.

Comforted by this view of the case, I fell asleep, and remained that way all night. In the morning I was unable to move, and thought I had become paralyzed from overwork, anxiety and worry. But it was merely the clothes. The heat of my body caked the mud with which the garments were smeared, and I was in a plaster cast. This pleasing discovery cheered me much, and as the day was Sunday, and bright and warm, I spent most of the time beating the mud armor off myself with a club. The Prize Beauty showed me how, as he was on to all the niceties of camp life. He had spent years at the business, and said he would end his unhappy days in gummy

seclusion. This victim of unrequited love worked one week and loafed two on the proceeds. That was his system.

A rugged constitution and an appetite of the same enabled me to survive my career in Mr. P. Beaumond's swamp. At the end of two weeks I headed for Houston to invest my 50 cents net profit.

CHAPTER XII.

*The Friendship of a Horse is a Good Thing,
but the Human Breastworks Business Is Not.*

When all else fails and the whole world seems turned against a fellow in distress, the horse will sometimes take him in and treat him kindly. There is a bond of sympathy between the horse and jackass, which may account for the ease with which I found haven in a Houston livery stable. I shared a sunny front box stall with a large red stallion, with a low board partition between us. The steed slept on his feet, while I reposed in an exploded bale of hay during the brief spells allowed for slumber. A livery stable career is a hectic one at best. The hours of work and rest mingle in a manner to make the amateur hostler daffy.

The red stallion and I got chummy some time after my escape from a railroad camp in the wilds of Texas. Buncoed into the swamp in the first place by means of a pass, I shoveled soft mud two weeks in order to earn my fare back to Houston. Thus I returned to civilization with a net profit of fifty cents, and an accumulation of caked mud on my person which no wasp could

ever hope to acquire. All I needed was some foliage among my hair to be a Human Flower Pot. In that shape I fell into a home among the horses, but I reached the livery stable by a painfully circuitous route. This was it:

On coming back to Houston the dry culvert that had been my home before seeking genteel employment in the railroad camp was still open to me. There I passed a thoughtful night. The iron foundry was still in a state of coma, and my mud-embalmed garments steered me off the track of other jobs. I was a hobo for fair. The railroad track leading north looked good to me, so at daylight on the second morning I moved away from Houston on foot, never to return. Any old place would do. My one ambition was to shake the dust of Texas from my feet. The soil is not so easy to shake when a fellow is japanned with that rich alluvium.

By noon I wearied of the telegraph poles and hand car shanties flitting past. At these latter institutions I paused and asked for work, but my nationality was against me. Keenly did I regret not having been born a Swede or Italian, so as to inherit a pair of leather pants from my father and a good job in America. At mid-day I left the track and took a short nap in a clump of trees. Professional tramps sleep in the

middle of the day, and I had been long enough in the business to enjoy certain of the luxuries. I awoke with a new idea, which was to switch off into the country and hire out to a farmer. All the train robber, cowboy and Texas Ranger romance had been jolted out of me by this time, and I actually yearned to be a farmer. A wagon road led away from the track through woods and swamps, and I followed it, keeping a sharp lookout for farms. Here and there stood a negro cabin in the center of a dead and barren field, with no sign of life. These were not the kind of farms I had seen in Illinois and Iowa. The idea of becoming a tiller of the soil began to ooze, but there was no use turning back.

Along toward dusk the smoke and spires of a city loomed up in the distance, and at sight of them I cut the last link that bound me to the farmers. In this new city, the name of which I didn't know, I would find friends and work and get on my feet, or rather off them, for I was pretty tired. Within a mile of the place I met up with a truck farm, aglow with early spring vegetables. The owner, a thin man, with pale whiskers, was pulling weeds near the fence. I hung my chin over the top rail, and asked him the name of the town.

"Houston," he said, without looking up.

“What!” I yelled. “Houston, did you say? Why, I left there early this morning, and have been walking all day.”

The truck farmer straightened his long, lean back, and took a good look at me.

“Young stranger,” he said, “I ain’t deaf and I ain’t crazy. That’s Houston. Be you all going thar?”

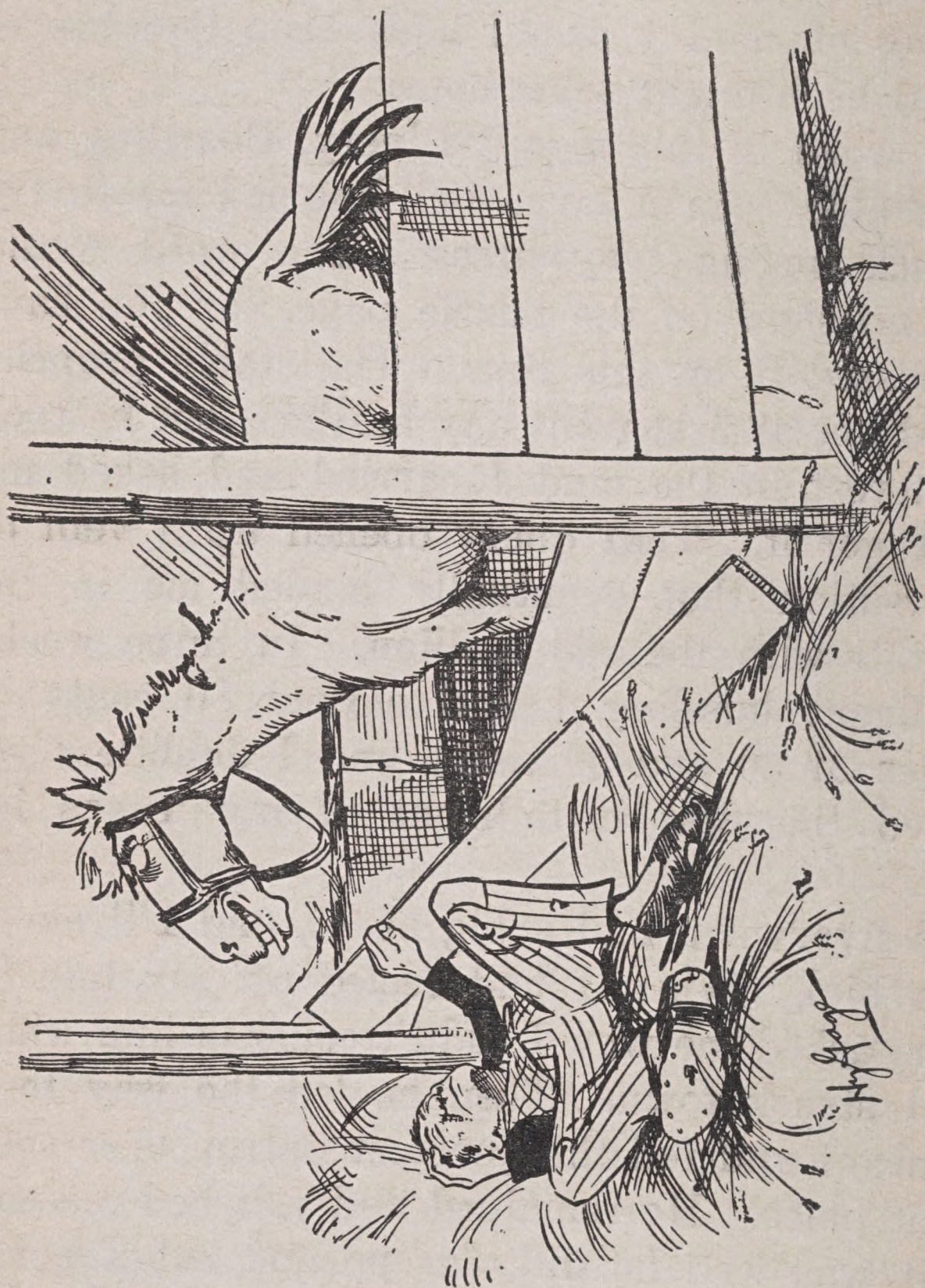
He put the query in such a tone that I at once hiked on to Houston, without further parley. What’s the use, I argued. The man lives here, and I’m a stranger in these parts. He ought to know. But how did I get back to Houston, after walking for ten hours away from that place? This proposition made me dizzy. In books of adventure I had read of lost people wandering in a circle. I was not lost, for there was Houston, in plain view. Apparently I had got fatally bent on my travels. The wagon road, crossed by other trails, wound about the country and led me astray. It all seems funny now, but the ring I walked around a township was no joke in those days. No matter whether I rode or strolled away from Houston the city was bound to turn up again and haunt me. As I neared my bad penny I fretted lest another hobo had found the dry culvert.

My happy home was still to let, and footsore

and disgusted, I passed the night there, with a homeless dog, who came in from a late foray, smelling of food I would have been tempted to eat had he brought some home.

One word in this sign, "Livery, Boarding and Sale Stable," on a large building led me to try my luck among the horses. The word would stand no show on the puzzle page, for you have all guessed it by this time. The stable proprietor did not at first want any hostlers, but he took an interest in the mud I carried and asked me how I got it. That query opened up a vein of conversation that eventually landed me in the box stall with the red stallion. In three weeks of diligent hustling I had earned 80 cents in bunches of 30 and 50 cents, and I doubtless resembled the first installment of my Texas income.

The liveryman had a big heart, and I'll never forget him. When I had reeled off my tale of woe he asked me why I didn't come to him when I first struck town. Then he led the way to a restaurant and fed the queerest patron ever seen in that place. He remained and watched me eat, and it was well he did, for no one but a horse owner could have paid the bill. In a voice choked with wonder and emotion the horsey samaritan offered me a position as chambermaid in his liv-



THE LIVERY STABLE CHAMBERMAID SHARED A BOX STALL.

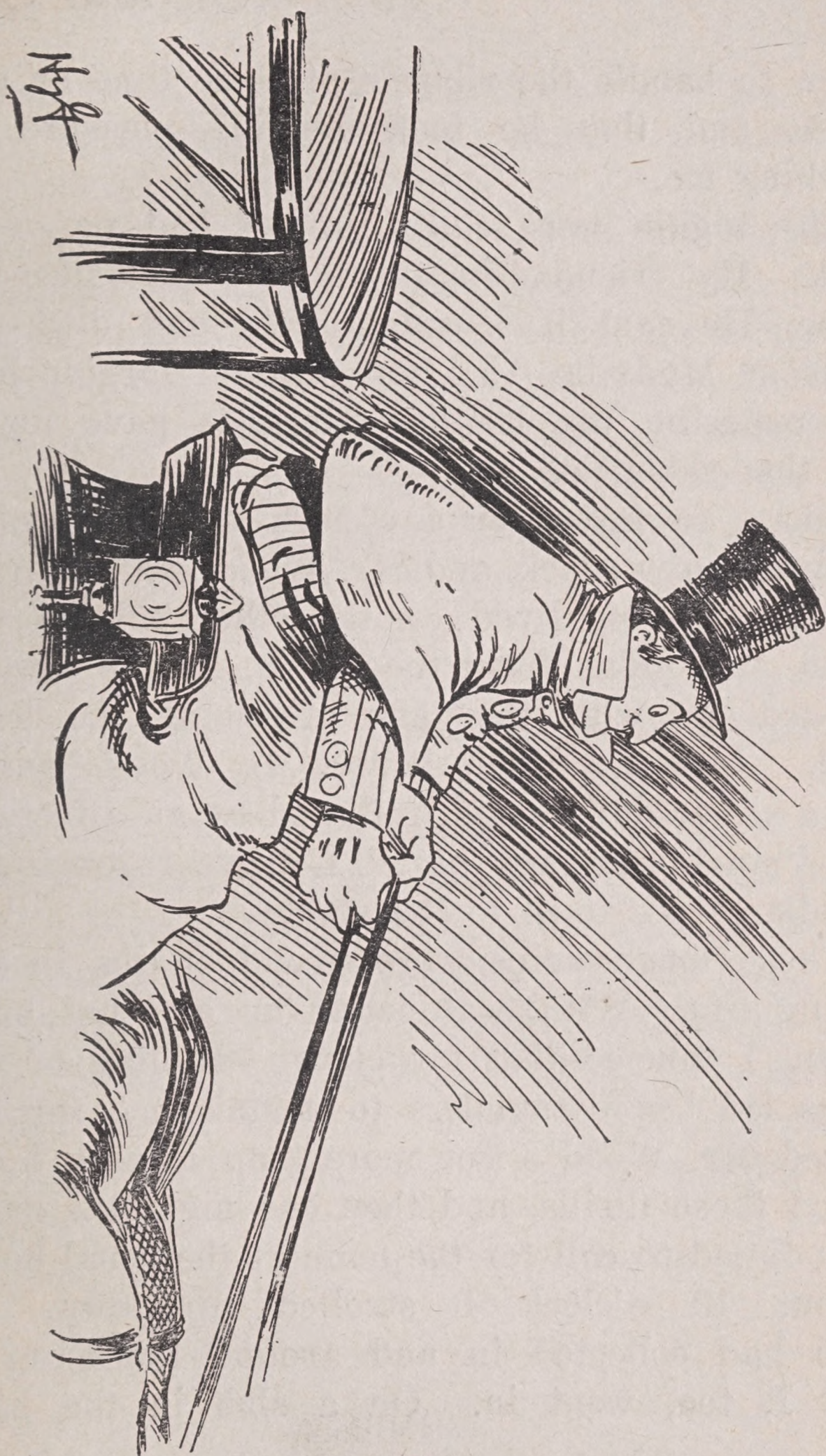
ery stable at 3 per week and board. He and his wife lived in the upper part of the stable and boarded the hands.

Thus I went to bunk in with the equines. My duties consisted of making beds for the horses and giving massage to overheated hack teams with a bit of gunny sack. Another hostler cut my hair with a pair of horse clippers while I sat on a bucket, and then he helped me to take a bath with the hose in the buggy-washing department. It was a buggy wash, all right. During these operations I lost considerable mud and felt better for it. I had a good home in the stable. It was killing work to tumble out of my hay at odd hours and dry a team of lather-covered horses, but I soon got used to it. My roommate snorted and kicked a great deal in the night with his iron-shod hoofs, and his restive demeanor robbed me of much sleep.

Among the patrons of the stable was a half-breed Mexican named Wood, who drove a night hack, paying a stated sum for the nocturnal use of the team and vehicle. The fact that Mr. Wood had lost the greater part of his nose, bitten off in a friendly argument with a fellow night hawk, did not predispose one in his favor, but he took a hot fancy to me. The reason did not appear until later.

One evening Mr. Wood said he had never seen a white person with whom he would rather associate than myself. That was flattering some, as the hackman had negro blood in him. My many sterling traits of mind and character, to say nothing of the way I rubbed sweaty horses, appealed so strongly to Mr. Wood he actually pined for my society. He spoke about it himself. In fact, rather than miss hobnobbing with me at least part of the time, the enamored Mr. Wood offered me \$1 per night to sit with him on the box seat of the hack and converse on general topics. As he was willing to pay for good society, and as I needed the money, I agreed to brighten the life of the lonely hackman, since a shift of hours had given me the day watch at the barn.

Night after night, at 8 o'clock, the hack rolled out of the stable. Mr. Wood sat on the box, soaking up social distinction, with me by his side. When waiting at the hack stand in front of a saloon, the driver allowed me to curl up in the cushions and sleep while he stood at the bar and drank milk punches. Sometimes he favored me with one of those invigorating beverages, but with a fare inside I had to be on the seat with him. On most of the trips I drove along the dimly lighted streets, at the request of Mr. Wood, who assured me that all great hackmen had to



I DROVE HOME AT 3 A. M.

learn to handle the ribbons at some time or another, and that he took genuine pleasure in teaching me.

The nights were chilly, and I had no overcoat. My friend bought me one just like his own. He said if I caught cold and died my folks at Mudville, Ill., never would forgive him for exposing my health. He also gave me a hat that resembled his.

Along toward 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning business grew slack, and Mr. Wood had me drive him home. He lived on the other side of the town, two miles from the stable, but he always trusted me with the task of taking the team back. Arriving at his house, Mr. Wood handed me a silver dollar, and, followed by an affectionate "good-night, my boy," I drove through the middle of the town to the stable.

Those lonely trips were proud epochs in my young life. With coat collar up and hat brim down, I fancied that my clever handling of the reins led boozy rounders to mistake me for the gifted Mr. Wood. For more than a week I enjoyed these thrills, and then one night the hackman failed to call for the team at the usual hour. About 10 o'clock I strolled up town. A mob had collected in and around the morgue, and I, too, went in. On a slab in the back

room, rested my late friend, Mr. Wood, with four Winchester bullets in him, placed where they would do the most good.

From the talk I learned that he and his hack had been mixed up in an abduction case from another town. Mr. Wood expected the avengers, all right, but he didn't know just when, and I—cheerful and obliging idiot—had consented to pose as living breastworks, and substitute for the modest sum of \$1 per night, not in advance. Why the men with the guns got him instead of me is something which Providence alone can explain. What a mark I would have been driving back alone from Wood's house to the stable had the avengers been about at that time. But they came late, and I lived to spend the few dollars earned in the human breastworks business. Since that time I have been more or less stingy with my society. Rather than let it out at that price per evening I flocked by myself. What I did with the little side money earned on the hack is related in the next chapter, in which I escape from Texas on a fluke.

CHAPTER XIII.

How He Bid Adieu to Texas and Aided and Abetted Another Boy in Search of Keen Adventures.

All things come to him who waits and saves his coupons and his pawn tickets, if any. During a short-ration campaign in Texas I wore pinned in my scanty attire two pale green slips. These were coupons issued by a pawnbroker at New Orleans. They represented one silver watch and my faithful \$2 bark trunk filled with fair to middling raiment. The game was for me to keep on guessing until I struck a job strong enough to amass \$12 in one vast lump. Thereupon the pawnbroker would remit my chattels on receipt of the tickets and money.

The contest lasted about six weeks. By sticking to the job in a Houston livery stable, which paid \$3 per week and food, but no sleep to speak of, I squeezed \$7 from a hard, unyielding world and sent for the watch. I hung it on myself for a couple of days and felt tolerably good in possession. But as I was not out for any records requiring accurate time, and as my working clothes had about gone the limit, I found an-

other berth for the watch in a Houston pawnshop, and had the trunk shipped from New Orleans. That was financiering some on small capital.

About the time my boiled shirts, collars and Sunday suit arrived the foundry foreman hunted me up at the stable. I had left a call in case anything happened, and he was there to tell me about it. A railroad shop in another town had burned and the work was transferred to Houston. The local shop would blaze forth in all its sulphurous glory the next week and needed hands in a hurry. In negotiating with me the foreman said a livery stable was the last place to look for iron molders. He had his doubts when he beheld me in tattered overalls and a 40-cent undershirt manicuring a lean hack horse. But he was up against it. So was I, and we agreed to give each other a trial.

With mingled feelings of joy and sadness I resigned from the box stall on Sunday night and bade farewell to my fellow-chambermaids in the stable. The liveryman gave us all a little coffee supper at the restaurant and sent me with a note to the keeper of a mechanic's boarding house. Thus I returned to an abode of luxury at \$4 per week. That night I slept in a real bed with sheets and pillows—the first spasm of downy

ease that had soothed my youthful frame in more than two months. At that I didn't sleep well. It was too easy. I missed the rumble of carriage wheels on the barn floor and the pensive snorts of the red stallion who shared my apartment at the stable. Then I worried some about the new job on which I would debut in the morning at the magnificent stipend of two bucks per day. All I cared for was to hold it down long enough to earn a get-away stake and fade forever from the Texas landscape.

While the job lasted I was a great success at making brake shoes for freight cars. At the expiration of a week malarial fever hit me, and I took the count. The shop was located on a stagnant lagoon, and one week was sufficient to fill me up with germs. I spent the next week in my new bed and got up dizzy and wobbly and busted. My prospects made me think of the fellow who said if he owned Texas and hell he would rent Texas and live in the other place. Too sick to work and with my name stricken from Dun's and Bradstreet's, the hotel man said the North was the place for people with fever and no money. I agreed with him, and he accepted my trunk and overcoat as the first move on a start in the right direction. With the board money thus saved by once more divorcing my

goods and chattels I bought a cheap valise and a cut-rate ticket to Galveston.

My scheme was to make New York by water, and a steamer from that port was due at Galveston the day I blew in. She was anchored outside the bar waiting on the tide when I reached the wharf with my little gripsack, one chill and fifty cents in ready money. The fare was \$50, but that small discrepancy did not jar me. I wore my best clothes, a new hair-cut and a silk cap. I had made one voyage across the Gulf as cabin boy and knew the ropes. If the steamer had a vacant berth it was me to New York in style.

When the big black hull swung into her slip I met the end of the gangplank coming ashore. There might be other boys desirous of side-stepping Texas, and I was taking no chances. But there was no need of hurry. The steward had all the cabin boys he wanted and he fired me ashore again almost as soon as the gangplank made connection. That was my finish, I thought, as I sat on the mooring pile and gazed hopelessly at the steamer. Bankrupt, sick and friendless, death would find me in Texas. In a fine fit of mental agony I beheld my bones bleaching in an unkempt alley behind some livery stable, and my folks at Mudville, Ill., await-

ing tidings from the absent one. I even tried to sing, "Oh, Where is My Wandering Boy?" but choked on the plaintive melody.

It was indeed a doleful picture, with but one ray of comfort. In case I lived and escaped to the North I would consecrate my life in warning foolish boys away from the Lone Star State. My own Texas experience, if related on the lecture platform with me starring as the Horrible Example, or published in tract form, might save many a boy the hardship and misery I had undergone. While I still sizzled with these noble thoughts a bullet-headed boy in a blue cap and short alpaca jacket came off the steamer and posted a letter across the street. He took a sharp look at me as he passed, and on the return trip he paused to converse.

"Do you live in Texas?" the boy inquired, with a sort of loving accent in the "Texas."

"Been here a couple of months," was my answer.

"What kind of a place is it?" he asked in a whisper, at the same time casting a furtive side glance at the steamer.

There was such an eager tone in the query that I tumbled at once. Here was a New York cabin boy fatally stuck on Texas, and my tender scheme to save such giddy youths blew up

in a flash of new hope. I lured him to his doom the best I knew how.

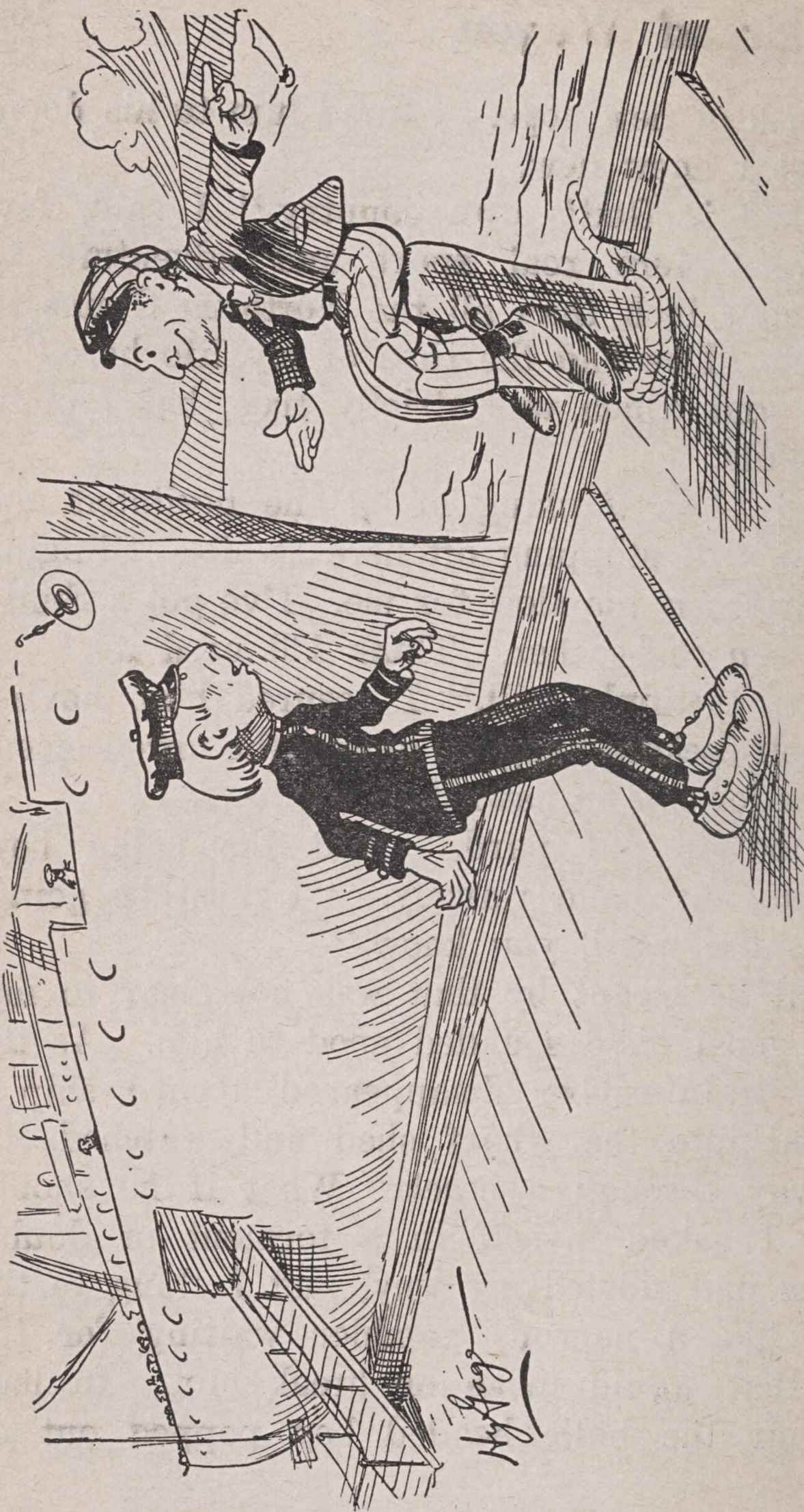
“Texas is God’s own country,” I said, fervently. “More real sport and adventure to the square inch than all the Northern States in a bunch. I’ve had the time of my life here,” I added, and which was strictly true, but I omitted details.

“Well, I’m thinking of—,” he hesitated and blushed, “of stopping off here awhile. Slinging hash at sea is too slow for me. I’ve got a Smith & Wesson self-cocker. Think I’ll need it?”

“You certainly will,” I assured him, having seen self-cockers hung up among the unredeemed-pledges-for-sale in pawnshop windows.

“Good-by, old pard,” said the cabin boy, wringing my hand warmly. “I must be going. Mum’s the word, you know.”

What he meant by that was not clear to me, but it must have sounded good to him. As the future train robber disappeared aboard ship I sneaked into the wharf shed and watched the gangway through a crack. What if he should balk? I asked myself in a torment of doubt. Things had started my way, and I clung to the crack like a nervous gambler waiting for the turn that would make or break him. In half an hour the bullet-headed boy popped out of



“TEXAS IS GOD’S OWN COUNTRY.”

the cabin. He wore his go-ashore clothes, carried a small bundle and held one hand on his hip pocket. That must have been the revolver ready for instant use. To an outsider this scene might have suggested humorous features, but it was a sad and serious piece of business. Heaven help the other bullet-headed boy! And yet he had more to start with than I did in launching a Texas career. Doubtless he got along very well while his health lasted.

No sooner was he clear of the ship than I broke away from the crack, went on board and stood around so that the steward could fall over me every little while. It was plain to observe that the chief steward was disturbed about something. He conferred with his assistants, and they seemed to be searching the ship. Finally, the chief interviewed me.

"Ain't you the boy that wanted to ship a while ago?" he asked.

"Sure," I said.

"Well, bring your dunnage aboard. We need a boy. One of the crew has skipped out." All of which was ancient history to me.

The upshot of it was I sailed for New York impaired in health and pocket, but vastly better off than the boy who succeeded me in the task of swinging Texas around by the tail. I

trust he potted a few wicked cowboys and rescued some imperiled maidens from the lair of the robber chieftain. Texas is full of just such jobs waiting for intrepid boys to come down from the North and straighten things out. I've done my share toward the improving and uplifting of that benighted Commonwealth, and if ever I return to Texas it will be on a writ of habeas corpus.

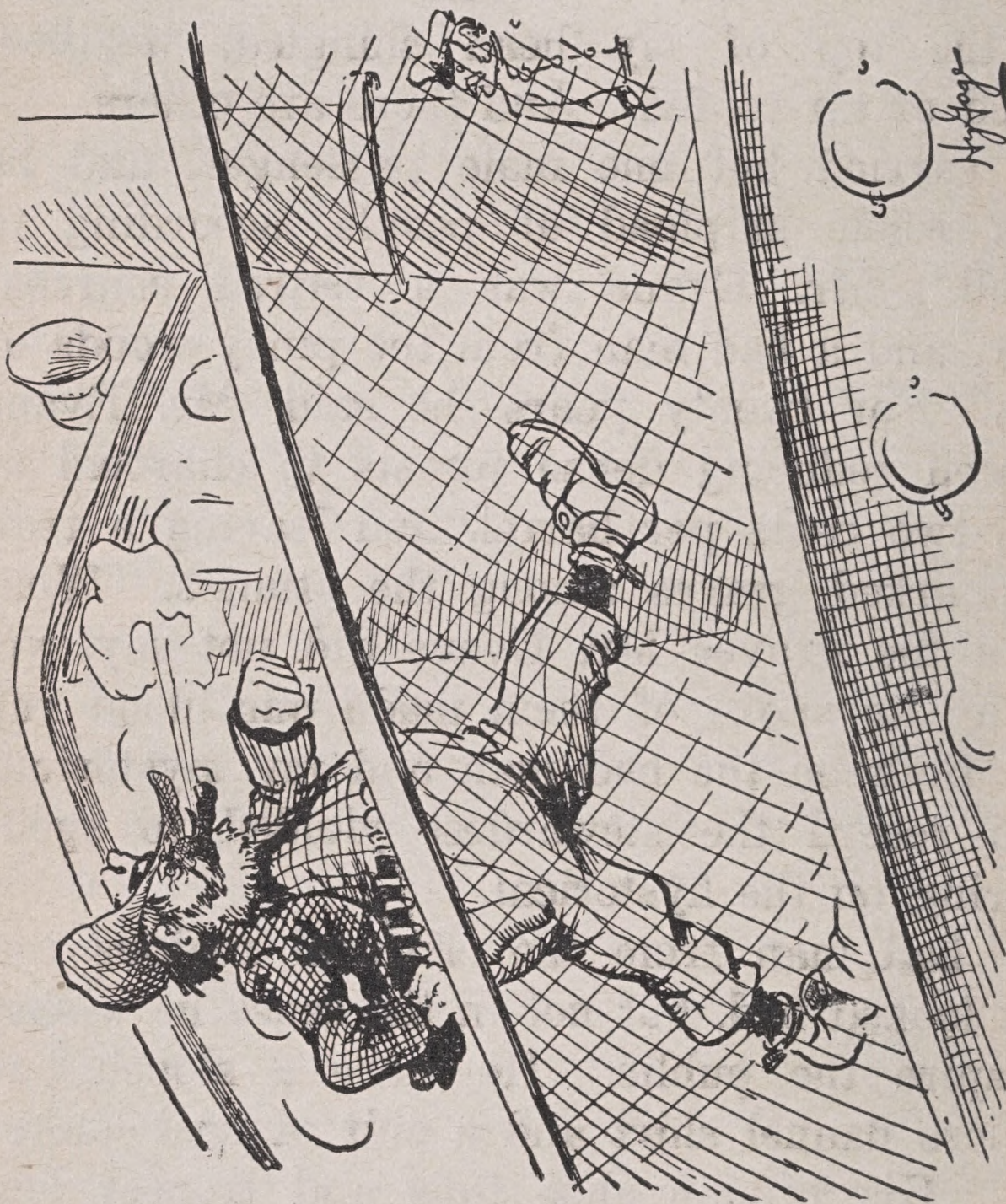
All the cabin crew, with the exception of a fat stewardess, built like a Bartlett Pear, treated me kindly. That good lady had little to do but fret about me, though I did not suspect her secret at the time. My pallor, due to sickness, and closely cropped hair interested the stewardess in my past. She was forever dragging reform schools and penitentiaries into the talk when I was around, and then watching keenly to see me blush or display other symptoms of guilt. Beyond a doubt she took me for a jailbird. She made it a point to hasten up and lock her stateroom door on seeing me near it, and had a habit of slapping her skirt pocket and feeling to see if her watch had departed. Not until I had been around the world some more did the conduct of the stewardess smite me, and then I blushed. Since then I've had little use for stewardesses, and read with interest newspaper

accounts of them falling overboard in mid-ocean.

I always wore my hair chopped close in those days in a style called "shingled," and it looked pretty good. Now I would look even better with the top of my head shingled, weather-boarded or tar-roofed. And there are others.

We carried but one male passenger, and he was a whole shipload of people, according to his tell. Mr. Evans was a retired charcoal burner, and a bad man from the piney woods of Texas. For twenty years, he said, Mr. Evans had been reducing dense forests to charcoal at twenty-two cents per barrel, and leaving a trail of unmarked graves among the stumps. What was in the graves Mr. Evans did not say, yet the way he spoke of them made our blood run cold. Between the bad man and my mysterious prison record the stewardess yielded to spells bordering on the hysterical.

The bad man from the charcoal regions certainly looked bad, but not in the sense he wished to inspire the public. He wore a slouch hat, collarless flannel shirt and a suit of rust-colored jeans. His brogan shoe tops and trouser legs lacked several inches of meeting, and the gaps exposed a pair of sockless ankles that looked like two sticks of charcoal. The bad man carried his trademark all right. Dressed up and drunk,



WANDERED ABOUT, INQUIRING IF ANYONE WANTED TO BE KILLED.

Mr. Evans wandered about the ship day and night, inquiring in a soft Southern dialect if any one desired to be killed. We had a score or so of female suffragists—fat and lean ladies with aggressive chins, heavy brows and funny bonnets—on the way to a convention at New York. The bad man didn't offer to kill any of the ladies. He was polite, and asked them to drink with him, and promised to expose the innermost secrets of the charcoal burning business.

When not thirsting for gore, Mr. Evans dozed in a steamer chair on the forward deck, resting his heels on a camp stool. This attitude of extreme nonchalance widened the gap between trouser legs and brogans and placed the charcoal ankles prominently before the public. No one minded this exhibit but the female suffragists, and they pestered the captain mightily. It was a shame, they said, for a man to invade polite society with his ankles in that condition.

“All right, ladies,” said the captain, who was a gallant gentleman, “I'll have ‘em scrubbed for you. Anything to oblige the sex. It will take place at 10 o'clock to-morrow morning.”

That was the third day out from Galveston, and sure enough, at 10 next morning the bold skipper and four deck hands surrounded the

bad man where he sat dozing with his heels hung up on the camp stool. The captain stood directly in front of Mr. Evans, wearing his hands in the side pocket of a large pea jacket. At a signal from the skipper the four deck hands yanked off the brogans and set in to scour the charcoal ankles. Mr. Evans never moved. The few spots on his face bare of fuzzy whiskers turned a dull white, then red, beneath the shadow of his drooping sombrero. To appear wholly at ease the bad man ground out a feeble snore which deceived no one. He slept throughout the operation while the suffrage ladies looked on in silent approbation; and when the deck hands had finished, the ankles of Mr. Evans resembled peeled beets.

The captain and his accomplices withdrew. Mr. Evans slept on. When out of sight and earshot the captain removed his hands from his coat pockets. In one he held a match; in the other a cigar, which he lighted and went about his business. The scrubbing incident closed. That certainly was a new way to tame a bad citizen. Mr. Evans was heard of no more on that voyage. The possession of clean feet broke his proud spirit and he lurked in obscure corners—sober, sullen, morose and unhappy.

I have withheld the name of the ship and her

The Bread Wagon

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captain, both of whom are still in commission, lest the scrubbing incident should hurt the traffic in charcoal burners, retired and otherwise. The skipper exceeded his authority somewhat, but Mr. Evans was new to the sea and didn't know it. He was awed.

CHAPTER XIV.

A Chapter Wherein He Found New York Too Big and Vast, so They Put Him off at Buffalo.

On reaching New York from Texas, following a long period of food and financial depression, the Bread Wagon was all but backed up to the wharf to meet me; and for quite a while I rode on the front seat. The captain of the steamer said I had no legal claim on him for wages, since I had taken the place of a cabin boy who ran away at Galveston. Still, in the goodness of his heart, the skipper gave me \$4 in new \$2 bills for toiling a matter of ten days on his boat. Half of this money went for a blue cap with gold lace on it, as I contemplated making another voyage as the Real Thing; but after scrubbing paintwork one day I soured on the sea and lit out, first selling my gorgeous cap to the ship's carpenter for \$1.

That goal of so many restless spirits—New York—was too big, too vast and overwhelming for me. The immensity of things dazzled me, and I got cold feet on the iron molding proposition because I couldn't see any foundries. Some years later, when I again blew in as a

newspaper reporter for Mr. Hearst, the village wasn't big enough. Strange, isn't it, how the universe shrinks and shrivels when a young fellow sets out to push it around with a lead pencil? But while my \$3 lasted I hung on to the metropolis, taking in the sights, mostly from the outside. Then I slid on to Albany, deeming that town about my size. They say the scenery along the Hudson is great. That may be true enough, but when the tourist makes the trip in the night in the paddle box of a steamboat the view is limited chiefly to foam and bubbles, and he is moved at times by that moist feeling.

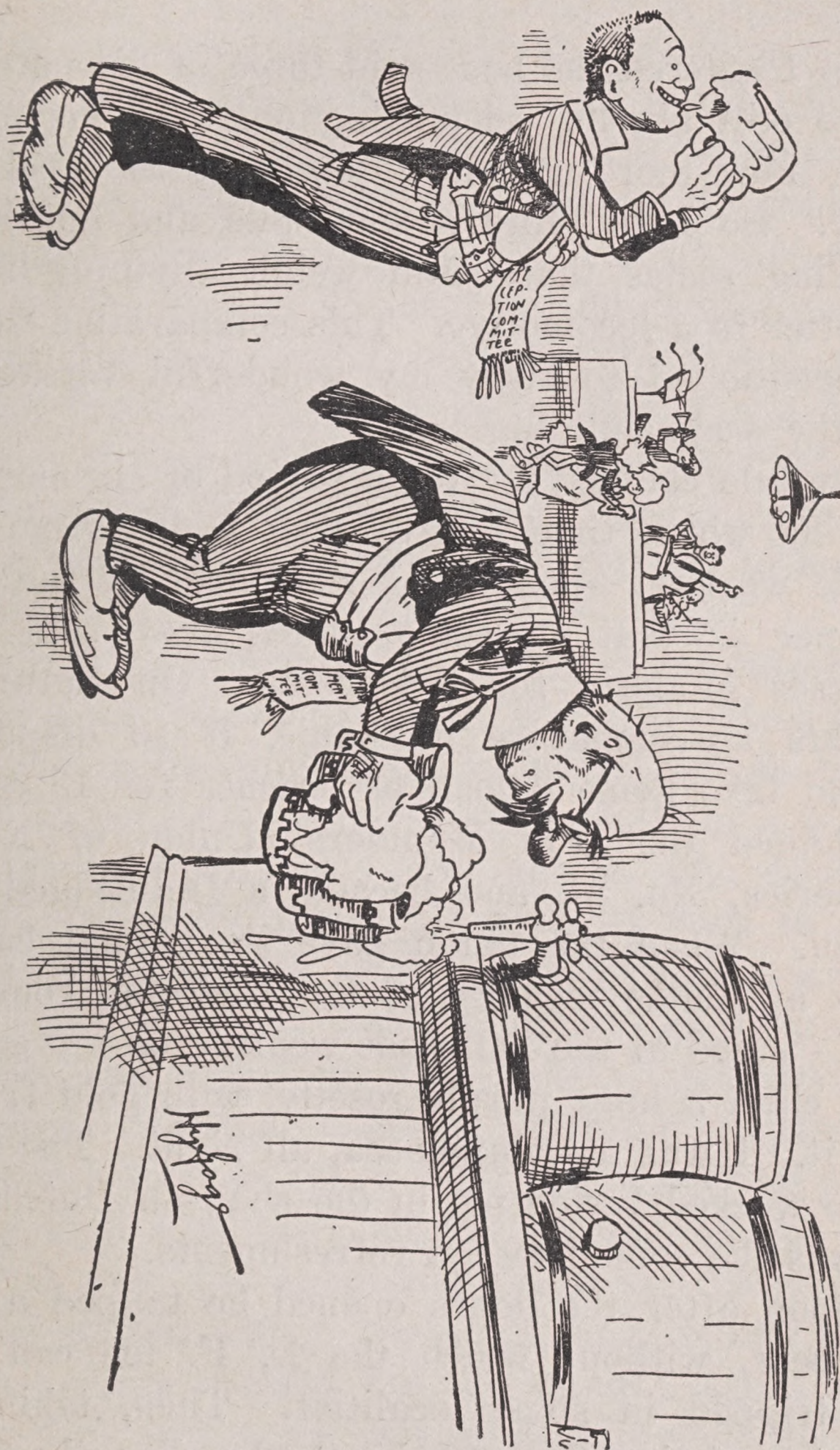
On the morning of Decoration Day a dead hero, without any rose garlands on him, stepped off at Albany with his little damp bundle and spent some quiet hours along the river front drying out. It was like Sunday. Next morning, before 8 o'clock, I struck a fine job and could have had several others. Many patriotic iron molders of Albany had scattered bright flowers on the graves of our nation's dead the previous day, and couldn't get their eyes open in time to go to work. One of the very best seasons to seek jobs in industrial circles is right after a holiday. The bosses are out looking for you. One month finished my course at Albany. I fell in with a crowd of gay young

men about town who doted on beer and variety shows, and the pace was too rapid for a sport brought up at Mudville, Ill.

One Saturday night after a wild debauch, and with twenty cents' worth of beer in my skin, I broke into the shop for my tools and started West on Monday morning on a scalped emigrant ticket. Riding on that kind of transportation and in that kind of a train is but little better than walking. The traveler may choose his own air and company while hoofing it down the pike. The coaches were packed with soapless foreigners, landed the night before, from an emigrant ship, and those who had no babies in arms prior to leaving home corrected the omission on the way. It was the nearest I ever came to touring with a circus and menagerie under one roof.

The day was the Fourth of July, and I celebrated my independence by sitting on a car platform, inhaling deep draughts of ozone, freedom and New York Central cinders. They put me off at Buffalo, and I was glad my scalped ticket didn't call for any more. Another hundred miles and the ticket would have been asphyxiated. My capital consisted of sixty cents and faith in the holiday theory—that a job would turn up in the morning. In the first

THE REFRESHMENTS COMMITTEE TAPPED A KEG OF BEER.



shop I entered the boss said three of his patriots were still absent, celebrating our glorious natal day, now more generally observed as Lockjaw Day. So I fell into a sand pile and got busy making scales that could weigh anything from a letter to a locomotive. This comparative range is mentioned to show my wonderful versatility in the scale building line.

Buffalo claimed me for a period of six months, during which time I never lost a day from the scale works. About all I remember of the city proper is that in some places they sold two glasses of beer for five cents. On Saturday nights an immature mechanic, if so disposed, could take home a load of peaches for 15 cents. I joined the Iron Moulders' Union of North America, No. 84, and became a full-fledged artisan. When the union gave its annual ball I was a lifelike member of the reception committee—stood at the hall door wearing on my swelling chest a huge purple rosette, with gold fringe on it. I was a Lalapaloosa, all right. The man who worked beside me in the shop—a Dutchman—was the committee on refreshments.

Soon after the doors opened he tapped a keg of beer, without which the L. F. toe can not be tripped in some localities. Then, taking a cluster of six schooners by the handles, the com-

mittee proceeded to fill them at the spigot. He loaded five. The sixth glass was upside down, and when the stream struck the bottom the Dutchman, with keen presence of mind, reversed his hand, spilling the five full glasses in order to load the sixth. We held an indignation meeting on the spot, and fined the refreshment committee for malfeasance in office, and it was only by the cleverest kind of politics he escaped being expelled from the union. For a space of three weeks his own shopmates refused to speak to him.

A rare combination of business and pleasure made a gay round of life at Buffalo. Weekdays I toiled in the sand and hot metal, and on Sundays in the summer months I barked for a Niagara Falls excursion. The genius who steered these personally conducted tours of yaps to and from the tumbling waters was a fresco artist who had a friend boarding at my beanery. That's how I got in. No tickets were sold in advance, as the cautious Buffalo sightseers wanted a line on the weather before doing anything rash with their 50-cent pieces. If the day opened fair, the excursion train was assembled at the station with a barker at each double platform selling tickets out of hand. All I got from this soft snap was a weekly peep at one

of nature's wonders and my dinner; but since I was seeing the world, that helped some.

At length prosperity palled on me. Things were coming too easy at the scale foundry, so I quit Buffalo with my union card and moved on to Chicago. There, in a moment of reckless extravagance, I purchased another \$2 trunk, which indirectly led me into a raging holocaust, but the trunk and its valuable contents escaped the flames. At Chicago I worked for the Crane Elevator Company, and boarded in North Sangamon street with an eminent steamfitter named Jim McCullom, from Muskegon, Mich. We were the star boarders, Jim and I, and our home was an ideal one of its kind, until, in an evil moment, we purchased trunks. Jim never did own one, and mine was lost, strayed or stolen in the wilds of Texas. When the morbid landlady beheld the new trunks moving in she thought we intended to move out—to shake her for another and more stylish beanery—so what did she do but close up the house the same evening before supper. This was, indeed, awkward, not only for the steamfitter and the iron molder, but likewise for two union carpenters, who chided Jim and me for buying useless trunks and bringing on wholesale eviction. The landlady was so mad and she retired from busi-

ness in such a hurry that the ousted quartette and its baggage took temporary refuge in one of the saloons prevalent in Chicago at that time. Now, they tell me, there isn't a saloon left in the city. They are all buffets.

Anyhow, a man in the future buffet said his wife kept boarders around the corner in Lake street, and we permitted the good lady to keep us until the raging holocaust led to other arrangements. There were no living ladders and human bridges at this fire, nor did we have time to spring heroics. Just how the thing started and who turned in the first alarm makes no difference now. It was enough to learn on that frozen midnight that the lurid flames of rectorial renown reached out from the side windows of a six-story brick oil works, and that Jim and I slept the sleep of the toil-worn and weary in a frail two-story frame cottage close under the lee of the raging holocaust.

When the landlady's son—a deaf mute—aroused us the shingles had caught and the windows were popping with the heat. Jim and I roomed on the top floor front, while the dumpy little landlady and her husband occupied the room directly below. The deaf mute son was coming home when he discovered the fire. He carried a latch key, but realizing he could raise

no outcry inside the house, the sagacious mute picked up a cobble and battered in the panels of the front door. The racket at last awoke us.

Jim noted the glare shining in our curtainless boudoir windows, and said it was time to escape with goods and chattels. I said so, too. In those days I combined art with the gentle craft of iron molding, and consequently possessed more chattels than Jim. He had no side line, steamfitting alone being his specialty, while I was incumbered with several frenzied crayon portraits of relatives on whom I had been practicing. We each had a trunk, but owing to the absence of valets our wardrobes were somewhat scattered.

On my suggestion that we protect our Sunday suits, even at the risk of life itself, we slid into overalls and shop shirts with the dexterity of lightning-change artists, and stuffed the contents of bureau drawers and closets into the trunks. A fusillade of hot bricks on the roof applauded this act, but there was no encore. Jim's trunk was no bigger than a soap box, and had a large leather cinch buckled about its middle. The strap cost more than the trunk. Grabbing the strap with one hand, he took hold of my trunk with the other, and led the way. I seized the rear handle in my right, and with the frenzied

crayon portraits tucked under my left arm, the procession glided rapidly down the stairs.

The cottage stood back about fifty feet from the street, and the blazing building abutted on the pavement. This gave us a fifteen-yard dash over which we broke the record, at the same time dodging showers of brick and fire and jets of icy water, for the department had reached the scene. It was only by a miracle that I escaped unhurt. Jim also emerged unscathed. Being a strong young man naturally and somewhat excitable, too, Jim held his trunk bodily in one hand above his head like a parasol until we reached the middle of the street. There we rested while Mr. J. McCullom lowered away his trunk and took a chew of plug cut smoking he found in his overalls.

Just at that instant the fat landlady oozed from the front door. Her valiant husband had made his exit a few seconds earlier, carrying two glass cones of hair flowers which Mrs. Spudhash had created in her remote and misty youth. At noon next day that splendid husband turned up heroically drunk, but with these gems intact. But what can you expect of a healthy man who lets his wife keep boarders?

When Mrs. Spudhash hopped out of bed she pulled on a loose wrapper, belted it at the waist



THE FAT LANDLADY OOZED FROM THE FRONT DOOR.

and darted into a closet. Between the bed ticks lay a purse containing \$80, but the lady never thought of mere money. From the closet she rescued six bandboxes, each containing a bonnet that she had made. Mrs. Spudhash's hobby was bonnets, mostly of rejuvenated velvet that still looked weary and green plumes of no particular epoch. She starred them on all occasions where a bonnet could be worn, and now was the time for a grand wholesale display of millinery.

Amid the withering deluge of cinders, flame and smoke my intrepid landlady danced out of her blazing portal, balancing the stock of bandboxes, piled six high, with the skill of a Japanese juggler. Moving slowly so as not to spill any bonnets, she had covered half the distance to the gate when a fiery thunderbolt from heaven in the shape of a redhot nail, four inches long, fluttered into the lady's bosom. This may have been a warm rebuke called down by Mrs. Spudhash's inopportune display of vanity, and again it may not.

At any rate the nail saved her life. Dropping her bonnets, the bulky lady emitted a shriek high above the tumult of the holocaust. She gained the open street in two flat jumps, just as an avalanche of brick and blazing timbers

crashed down on the cottage and into the yard, burying the velvet bonnets beneath twenty feet of debris. The nail was saved, however. Mrs. Spudhash carried this souvenir of our holocaust three squares before the police could overhaul her, and then the nail was quite cold.

With the hair bouquets and the nail, all they had saved from the wreck, the thoughtful Spudhashes again set up housekeeping, but Jim and I did not return to this new abode. While not insistent in the matter of luxuries, we considered the furniture inadequate and not in harmony with our trunks, which had escaped without a scratch. So the steamfitter and myself went elsewhere to put in our meals and take out our sleep.

CHAPTER XV.

*Back to Mudville to "Accept a Position," and
Away Again to the Wilds of the West.*

Every now and then some family breaks loose with the woozy idea its beautiful and brainy son is much too good for his job, whatever it may be, and sets about to elevate him in life. An epidemic of this sort hit me after batting around the world a couple of years, reveling in marvelous adventures and hairbreadth escapes by field and flood and livery stable. The folks at Mudville, Ill., said it was time to settle down and become an ornament to society; that my intellect, which was then vivid enough to pour hot metal into holes in the sand, fitted me for something higher and nobler and more recherche than iron molding.

At the time this outburst of family solicitude blocked my chosen career I was earning \$12 a week in a Chicago foundry and paying my monthly dues into the union. Still, that wasn't good enough for me, so one day in mid-winter the Author of my Being came on and yanked me back to Mudville. He had, he said,

secured for me a position—not job—in the village ice cream parlor, where I was to work for nothing and learn a genteel business. Note the difference between a job and a position. At the former I made two dusty dollars per day; in the latter I wore a clean smile and a laundered shirt, with the prospect of pulling down something like \$3 a week in the misty future. In fact, I was slated to become a regular dude.

There wasn't much doing when I butted into the higher life as depicted in a country ice cream foundry in winter. It would have been more congenial tending the lobster stall in a city fish market. The Arctic soda fountain which had a thirsty Polar bear climbing the North Pole for a glass of sparkling sarsaparilla at the top, was swathed in gunny sacks, and the ice cream freezer was frozen fast to the sidewalk in front of the Parlor. However, they let me turn the peanut roaster, sweep out the shells and monkey with the kerosene lamps. Three weeks I clung to this genteel situation like a man afloat in deep water with a shingle, while my dinky competence amassed in the foundry—coarse and uncouth place—dwindled softly.

“This is the limit, and then some,” I said to myself, after which I borrowed \$15 from an opulent clerk in the pants emporium and sidestepped

Mudville in the night without issuing any hand-bills regarding my movements.

The first stop was at Omaha, the theatre of social and industrial triumphs two years before. There was no one in the old shop I knew save a son of the former boss. His father, he said, was running a gigantic shop at Leadville and wanted vast quantities of molders. The son was going on in a short while, and he advised me to burn the rails to Colorado without loss of time and cuddle down with the old man. It was me to Leadville on this straight tip.

I reached the great mining camp, high up in the mountains, the possessor of \$1.50 and some hand-baggage. The gigantic foundry, that had gone daffy for want of hands, was a miserable board shack containing Old Man Thomas and one dejected looking molder prodding around in some half-frozen sand. The old man was startled to see me and he choked and spat copiously when I reeled off the pipe dream his son had smoked for my benefit at Omaha. Maybe the boss had blown his bugle by letter and the son was innocent of pipey deeds. Anyhow, there wasn't enough work to keep the foreman and his hired man warm.

However, the prospect didn't daze me. I was dazed already, having been two days and nights

in a day coach without sleep. Mr. Thomas kindly forsook his job and volunteered to help me find a cheap place in which to slumber a few paragraphs; he would do that much for old times' sake. We found lodgings over a keno joint, and I had no sooner turned in than the old man was back, thumping at my boudoir door. The dejected looking molder Mr. Thomas had left at the shack shop knew the foreman's son was coming on from Omaha. Mistaking me for that favored offspring, the dejected mechanic jumped his job rather than wait and be fired in the evening. He was a proud and haughty spirit anyhow. The old man came hustling back to tell me this, and, because I needed the money, I crawled out of bed and went to work at \$5 a day. Some people are born to luck and others stumble into it while walking in their sleep.

Business picked up a bit by the time the son arrived, and the boss found work for us all. But there was another less fortunate victim of this gigantic foundry swindle. This was B. Jones, a furnace tender, who had worked with us at Omaha. Like myself, the confiding Jones took the tip and galloped on from some place in Iowa. He landed in camp a bankrupt, and was eking out a greasy existence as a dishwasher in a restaurant. Sometimes I called on Mr.

Jones and found him enveloped in an air of extreme melancholy and a blue apron, swabbing gravy off the plates in a large tub. Jones was a diplomat. He had soured on the Thomas outfit, for cause, and eventually he turned me against them by depicting the joys of railroad-ing in Idaho. I had saved up \$60, and when Jones learned this he said it was time to start. He would show the way to Idaho, while I backed the enterprise. Sometimes I think B. Jones was working me.

To save railroad fare to Denver, which would have taken half my capital, we walked out of Leadville, over Mosquito Pass, 14,000 feet in the air, pack-laden and bucking a blizzard. We were sixteen hours reaching the valley on the other side of the range, half dead from cold and fatigue. There we encountered a wandering woodchopper and his boy, bound to Denver by wagon. The party camped that night in a deserted log cabin, in the mountains, and the woodchoppers hauled us to Denver in the course of a week. Then the wily Jones unfolded his scheme, which was nothing more than a pair of fine jobs in a railroad construction camp. I kicked on that, having had one experience in a Texas swamp, but Jones assured me, on his honor, that Idaho was all dry land. He had

been there and knew. The Oregon Short Line was building from Granger, Wyo., on the Union Pacific, to Umatilla, Ore., on the Columbia river. In that wild and desert region good men were scarce, and Jones said they needed us.

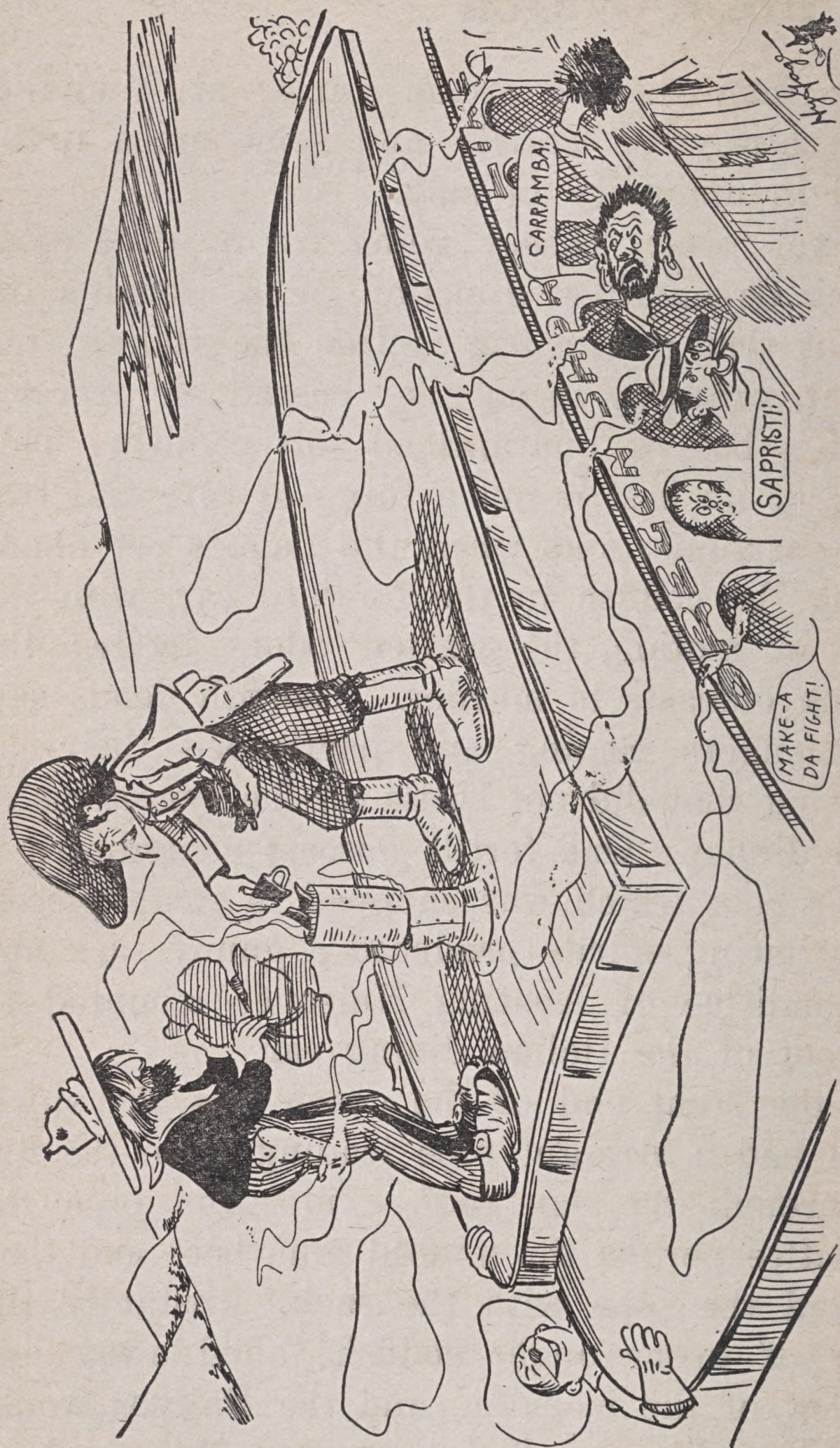
The Short Line office at Denver gave us laborers' passes to American Falls, Idaho, on the representation of Jones that we were expert drillers and blasters of lava rock, bridge builders, mule skimmers, and what not. I bought blankets and grub, mostly airtight in tin cans, and we pulled out for Idaho in a special train of four condemned emigrant cars jerked along by one crippled freight engine. Our party comprised 400 select outcasts, from all parts of the world, including 100 Italians jammed like angle worms in the forward coach. The exclusive company in the three remaining cars made up of confirmed railroad laborers, tin-horn gamblers on the pork, jim-jams specialists, escaped convicts, horse thieves, a few Turks and one Greek, murderers, embezzlers, wife-beaters, alimony dodgers, plain bums and Mr. Jones and his financial backer.

I saw plenty of bottles, but not a single cake of soap in the entire caravan. However, my chaperon said it was all right and that we soon would be there. At that, I liked the prospect

better than the ice cream parlor at Mudville. There always is variety and some spice to be found in humanity in bulk.

It was pretty cheesy going for a while after leaving Green River Junction, Wyo. During the stop at that classic flag station the Italian contingent, prowling in an alley behind the grocery, found a box of quarantined salt codfish. This edible at its best is not a thing of rare and fragrant perfume, and when the dagoes set about boiling the codfish in the forward car, with the train in motion, the wafted odors incited the trailing outcasts to murder. The fish fiends saw the avengers coming and barricaded their car door, but that did not bottle up the symptoms of a hot dinner. One fertile outcast contributed a rubber boot which was chopped in small pieces. Other daring spirits produced a gunny sack and a Committee of Abating Nuisance mounted to the roof of the Italian dining car.

In the front end of the coach was the stove, which had a straight pipe leading from the fire up through the car roof. Into this pipe the committee poured the minced gum boot and then plugged the pipe with the sack. Instantly the flavor of overwrought codfish faded away like the dew of the morning, and the Italians would have done likewise had they seen the ghost of



IN THIS PIPE THE COMMITTEE POURED THE MINCED GUM BOOT.

a chance. Wreaths, spirals and streaks of dark purple smoke floated from the car windows until the heads of the strangling Italians blocked those openings. Two of our men guarded the front door with knives. The rear exit was so effectually barricaded on the inside the frenzied inmates themselves couldn't open it.

Stray flashes of the cremating gum boot penetrated the rear coaches, but the outcasts climbed to the roofs, and thus diluted the main current with fresh air, while the penned-up Italians spluttered and gasped in the fumigating oven. Both sides of the car were draped in garlands and festoons of unhappy creatures, hanging from the windows, and it was said half a dozen or so fell off and never were heard of more. I learned afterward the Italians expected the stuff in the stove to blow up with fearful carnage, and coming from a bomb-building race, this fear buffaloes the whole crowd. There must have been a Dago or two from Paterson, N. J., in that bunch. In time the gum boot calmed down and the surviving codfish fiends fell back into their car pale, sick and exhausted. The gum boot was a beautiful idea in a way, for the remainder of the trip the tourists in the forward car stuck to cold victuals.

I never care to criticise the likes and dislikes

or the eating habits of my fellow-beings, but, honestly, in this instance I feel the Dagoes got all that was coming to them, and got it hot. Gum boot, properly applied, is one of the best disinfectants I know of for shopworn codfish. Try it some time. To my notion, the Italian is rapidly supplanting the Digger Indian in this country. You seldom see him without his pick and shovel. This observation has no special bearing on the fish story, but I couldn't help wedging it in as a delicate little bon mot.

Thus, and in other harmless ways, did the outcasts, Mr. Jones and myself, beguile the days of weary travel. We ate, slept, breathed and had our being on the cushionless seats, which were harder than the pale blue benches at the circus. At Ogden all hands took a change of venue to those openwork, peekaboo cattle cars, fitted with backless benches. The cattle had but recently finished their journey, though no one informed us of that fact. Again I spoke to Mr. Jones about our general affairs. He told me to cheer up—that in two more days and nights he would produce Idaho, as per agreement. To prove he had a kindly eye and mind focussed on my welfare, the versatile Jones whittled me a wooden spoon, with which to partake of Boston beans direct from the can. When not otherwise em-

ployed, I wore that spoon in the upper left-hand pocket of my vest. The spoon was the only personal ornament I possessed, being at that period a plain and unassuming youth.

One week from the Denver gateway our swine special paused abruptly at American Falls, owing to the absence of any more track. The Falls marked the outpost of civilization in that direction. The few inhabitants lived in tents and caves with canvas roofs. Having neither tent nor cave, Mr. Jones and I pre-empted a patch of tall weeds with fuzzy tops. Once more I tackled Mr. Jones regarding the giddy sport of railroading in the remote West. Jones made a brutal retort about me being a cheap knocker. Maybe I was a good thing, not, to buy him beans and blankets for the doubtful privilege of becoming a castaway—to inhabit the earth like a prairie dog minus his burrow.

CHAPTER XVI.

Scratching Gravel with a Mormon Outfit, Building Railroads in the Idaho Desert.

In the last sad narrative of my woes I left myself marooned on the Eastern edge of the desert at American Falls, Idaho. An unfinished bridge spanned Snake river at this point. Beyond stretched five hundred miles of sage brush, lava beds, mountains and forest wilds that offered superior exit to the Pacific Coast; behind lay the railroad, over which none but persons of ample means could travel eastward, as the free work trains ran one way only. Therefore, it was me to the forest primeval with my little pack.

To a certain extent I was like the ant who puts the sluggard wise. The ant sets forth on a journey and encounters a telegraph pole. Instead of passing around the base, the energetic ant, being full of ginger, climbs up one side of the pole, crosses the top and skates down the other side, after which the intelligent insect proceeds merrily on its way. There was no thought of turning back and I had not time to go around.

A Mormon outfit that had a section of roadbed to build at a point fifty miles away in the desert

picked me up as a valued asset, and the caravan of mules and canvas-covered wagons moved majestically across the sandy waste. The boss of the outfit, a large hairy Mormon, traveled with all the comforts of home. His personal retinue consisted of eight subdued wives and forty-six children. We looked like an orphan asylum out for a straw ride, minus the straw. Three wagons, each drawn by six mules, transported the family. The proprietor and his wives, in a congested state of connubial felicity, led the procession. Their offspring rode in two double-decked wagons built after the manner of menagerie cages. Large and medium-sized children occupied the lower compartments, and fought each other to a finish, while the tots enjoyed the better air and scenery afforded by the roof gardens.

Behind the nursery straggled at least twenty huge wagons enechelon; but I didn't know that until years afterward, when I saw pictures of battleships enechelon at Hampton Roads. This formation was an idea of the boss Mormon, who was a frugal man. The drivers and workmen comprising the rear guard kept a sharp lookout for sunbonnets, shoes, playthings and such children as dropped themselves overboard along the way. Progress was slow because of heavy going over a roadless route and the frequent stops made

to tally up the kindergarten. Six days were required to cover the fifty miles, much time being lost in the construction of bridges across dry gulches and hustling to find water for the animals.

Something like one hundred men and boys represented the bone and sinew of the expedition. We worked our passage to the scene of actual toil in return for board and lodging en route. There was little to do except lighten the pathway of the mules by pushing the heavy wagons from behind and hauling on the wheels in sandy ruts.

The vehicles were laden to the guards with plows, scrapers and provisions, mostly salt pork and beans in bulk. At the camp fires, night and morning, we cooked viands enough to last until the next halt. Each man carried his own blankets, in which he slept on the ground beside the wagons and listened to the coyote cooing to its mate in the stilly watches of the night. Quite poetical!

Polygamy, as practiced in that grading camp outfit, was a rare and pleasing spectacle when Mr. Simpkins planted his family in the desert at our journey's end. He carried a ready-made community with which to populate any region he chose to infest. His eight wives all dressed alike in limp blue sunbonnets and limper red calico gowns, which obliterated whatever beauty and

shape those unfortunate females may have possessed. One sallow, biscuit-fed Mrs. Simpkins weighed ninety pounds; another ranged close to 300 and was built on the lines of a mud scow. Side by side, these two suggested a herring and a halibut.

There was method in Mr. Simpkins' multitudinous joy sharers. They fried salt pork for the hoboes and saved the expense of employing Chinese for that purpose. A pack of shaggy dogs herded the children in their waking hours.

From out the chaos of that wind-swept, sun-blistered caravan of tired babies and hardened men grew a village containing many of the latest improvements, including a waterworks.

On a level-stretch midway of the section we intended to grade Mr. Simpkins waved his wand and the city burst from its shell. All hands lived in tents. Little canvas structures of the army pattern were set up for the men, with the Simpkins layout as a sort of government seething in the middle. One tent as large as that used by the fly-by-night country circus housed the eight wives and forty-six children.

A long, narrow tent attached to one side of the Simpkins abode served as a dining hall, in which the wives elected to that service did the honors three times per day. Pork and beans, flapjacks

The Bread Wagon

and a flour gravy known as "Mormon white" stirred our jaded appetites some. Occasionally the ladies passed out a little "Hereafter," alias dessert, in the shape of dried fruit stewed in river water. The nearest water—Snake river—was twelve miles distant, so Mr. Simpkins installed a water wagon. He built a tank on wheels, caulked the seams with white lead and placed one man and four mules in charge. This system was kept in operation night and day in order to supply the camp, and the river water didn't lose anything after sloshing twelve miles in the tank.

One evening at dusk the water wagon straggled into camp in charge of the faithful mules. The day driver—a morbid hobo of moody habits—had disappeared. They found his moist remains in the tank while transferring the water to barrels. Whether he committed suicide or fell into the opening behind the seat never will be known, as we had no coroner. Anyhow, Mr. Simpkins was plainly annoyed and spoke with some bitterness of the carelessness of certain people intrusted with delicate missions. That tankload of water was reserved exclusively for the mules, and the camp wiggled along on emergency rations until another cargo could be brought from the river. The driver was buried in the sand with a broken neckyoke marking the spot—tombstone and epitaph in one.



"WE HAD OUR SALOON IN FULL BLAST."

The vanguard of civilization—two tinhorn sports, one barrel of whiskey and a poker table—reached the camp one lap ahead of the main expedition. We had our saloon in full blast before the tented town was laid out. The tin-horn sports opened for business under a flaming canvas of red, white and blue, their idea being to please the optic nerve as well as tickle the vitals. They placed the barrel on end in the center of the tent, laid a board across the head for a bar and placed thereon half a dozen small-sized baking powder cans. The drinking cups bore the inscription, "Absolutely Pure," but this legend did not apply to the contents of the barrel. That fluid was of the brand now known as Biograph whisky—two drinks and you see the moving pictures without extra charge.

Amid these surroundings I entered upon a new life among the Mormons and didn't like the place. Poker was too rich for my blood, and the liquid Biograph films at 25 cents per can were beyond my means, so I devoted myself exclusively to building the Oregon Short Line. Those of you who glide in Pullmans along that route never dreamed, perhaps, that I was there ahead of you as chief engineer of a two-handled scraper and one span of pie-colored Mormon mules.

Building railroads in the desert is quite roman-

tic at times, and, as few of the scraper hands have embalmed the sport in literature, I submit the foregoing details just to show what some men will do in order that others may ride—sometimes on passes. That makes it bad again.

At one part of our section the grade called for an embankment forty feet high, and we built it of fidgety alkali dust that burned the eyes and blistered the throat. The dry earth was hauled in scrapers from the level stretches and dumped at the head of the fill. Then man, mule and scraper tumbled in a free-for-all down the sloping bank, kicking up clouds of choking white dust that floated away on the breeze like blizzard snow. It took longer to build the embankment because of the wind and vast quantities of dust swallowed by the busy toilers. For this job I pulled down \$1.50 a day and board. They burned me out in two weeks, and I would have stayed and died, no doubt, but for an unconscious tip furnished by a tramp with St. Vitus' dance.

He came along one Sunday, twitching and jerking like a marionette and whistling a merry tune. Nothing worries the genuine tramp so long as he isn't working. That fellow was a phenom. He bore a pack of blankets, grub and two one-gallon water cans slung over his shoulders. In his right hand he carried a long handled frying pan, which,

in the throes of his affliction, he swung and waved and rattled like a Salvation Army lass with her tambourine leading the bass drummers on to glory. Dropping his pack and pan at the water barrel, the tramp stopped whistling and said, "Howdy, fellers; hot here, ain't it?" Then he helped himself to Snake river water from Mr. Simpkins' barrel.

I am not making jest of human affliction, and I trust this true statement will find credence. In order to slake his thirst the jiggly tramp seized the dipper in both hands, filled it and rested the bottom on the rim of the barrel. In his weird contortions he spilled more than half the liquid and danced one and a half times around the barrel, still holding the dipper in position and sliding it along as he danced. Having swallowed all that didn't get away from him, Mr. St. Vitus straightened up with a satisfied "ah" and looked the camp over. He seemed to like the idea of companionship, if only for a little while. So, gathering a bundle of sagebrush twigs, he built a fire and sliced some bacon which he fried in the long handled pan; made a pot of coffee and dined within ten feet of where a bunch of us were sitting.

That is what I call independence without any special declaration of the same. I have seen less

violent cases of this malady hopelessly immured in hospitals, and here was a victim whose very hair twitched with muscles run amuck. A thousand miles from nowhere, and at least another thousand to the next place, that writhing wanderer showed his contempt for the heavy hand of fate, the usages of hospitality and the world in general. He tarried with us merely to save the precious water in his cans. After dining and carefully wiping the frying pan with a piece of gunny sack, Mr. St. Vitus packed up and two stepped, polkaed and waltzed himself away into the wilderness. Long after the sagebrush and dust hid his twitching form I heard the clatter of the faithful frying pan bumping his bony knee caps.

From the visit of this tramp I evolved a plan of escape. When I resigned my mules and scraper the boss Mormon said I was crazy, but he gave me a time check, which the saloon proprietors cashed at a 50 per cent discount. Very kind of them. Doubtless they thought I needed the money. Meanwhile a tented store full of general merchandise and more whisky, had crawled into our community. There I purchased a new pair of overalls and a pair of brown canvas baseball shoes, with leather strips across the uppers—the kind of shoes Uncle Anson wore in his younger

days at Rockford, Ill., which town is not far from Mudville, same State. Perhaps the baseball affinity that claimed me in after years lay dormant in those canvas shoes, in which I tramped a matter of five hundred miles. Stranger things have happened but generally they occur in fiction.

Besides the shoes I amassed two empty syrup cans for water tanks, a small coffee pot and a tin pie plate in which to cook. A few pounds of self-rising flour, some ground coffee and a slab of bacon, or, rather the obese bosom of the female swine. These fancy groceries, added to my blankets, made about all I could tote.

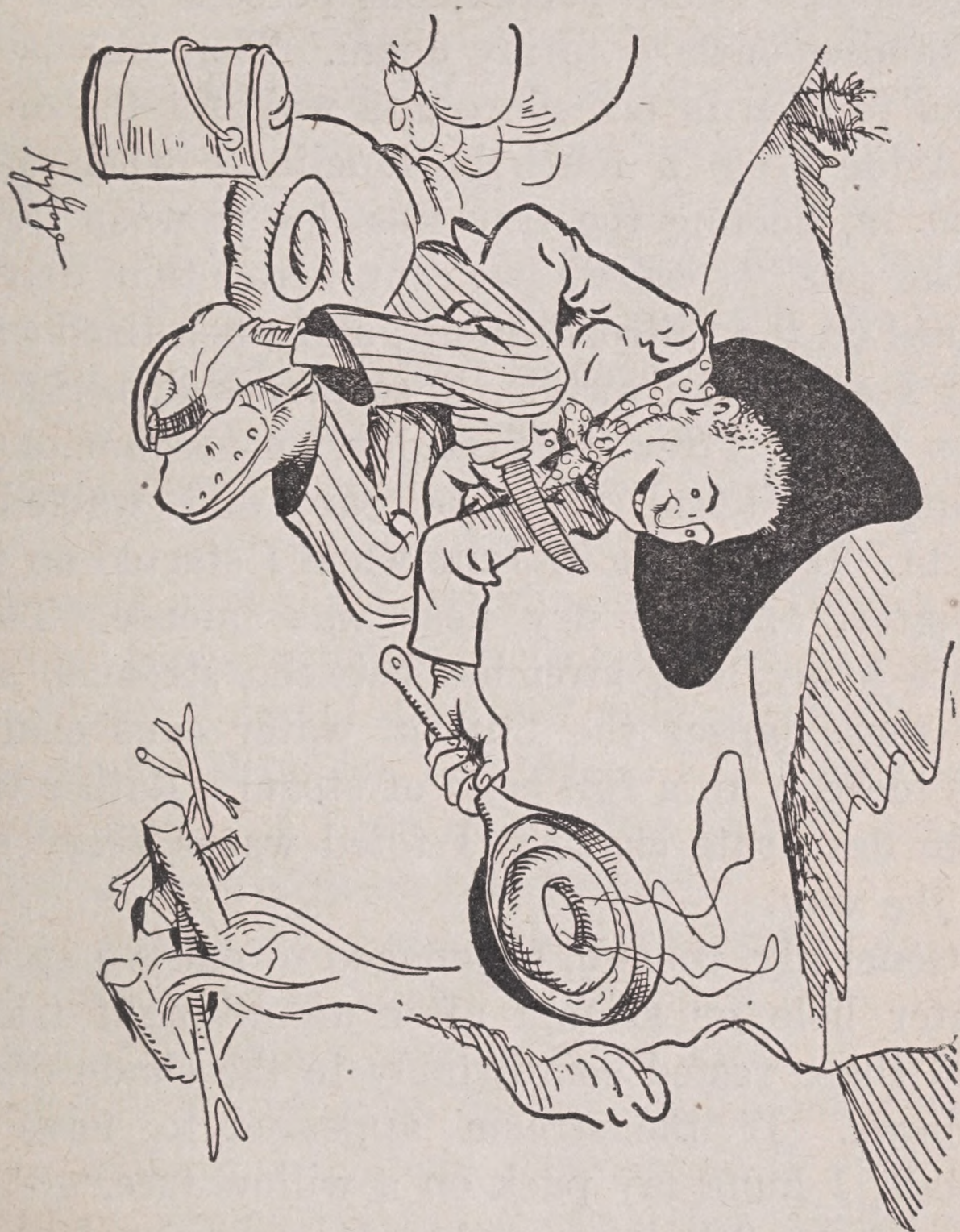
An ancient overland trail through Idaho and Oregon crossed our camp at right angles. The St. Vitus dance man set out on that trail, and if he could hold the middle of the road, I, a young and robust boy, should, at least, keep the trail in sight. It was me to the Pacific Coast or bust. Bidding good-bye to the Mormons and Gentile hoboes, I turned my freckled nose toward the setting sun. Those rough but honest friends said I would fall by the wayside—die of thirst and starvation. Little did they wot that some day I would own a Bread Wagon and feed myself in luxurious indolence.

CHAPTER XVII.

A Problem in Rapid Transit and How it Was Solved with the Aid of a St. Vitus Dance Man's Example and a Hobo Outfit.

Here is a hot problem in rapid transit: From American Falls, Idaho, to the Pacific coast the distance, in ante-railroad days, was all of five hundred miles. I was a transient guest at the Falls and had nothing to speak of but feet and a desire to keep moving. How did I get through the wilderness? The answer is easy. I walked, as a general thing, and did the sum in a little more than three months over an ancient stage trail, pausing at intervals for repairs and to earn a grub stake.

About one day ahead of me on the dusty pike was another lone tramp, equipped with a bad case of St. Vitus' dance and a long-handled frying pan. Whence he came and whither he hiked mattered little. His picturesque passage through a Mormon grading camp in the desert suggested to me the idea of quitting the railroad business and pushing forward on foot to the busy haunts of man. So I plagiarized his traveling outfit to the smallest detail—frying pan, coffee pot, water cans



MAKING "HOBO" BREAD.

and blankets—and tore myself away from the Mormons. Those polygamous persons said I was hastening onward to my doom. That was better than to stop in one place and wait for the doom.

Aside from a touch of loneliness when night shut in, hoofing the trackless desert wasn't such a bad job. It was 90 per cent. better than driving mules on the railroad dump; and when tired walking I could run awhile, if so disposed, being my own boss. After the first day, on account of the heat, I switched my time card and walked at night. It was late in June when I started on this saunter, and the dry heat was intense. There were many long stretches between streams, and, on these lapses the faithful water cans enabled me to keep up a full head of steam. Rather than take desperate chances, I toted water every step of the way.

Generally, though, I managed to reach a spring, water hole or stream after an all-night tramp, and there rested comfortably in the shade of the willows. If the stream appeared to have the goods, I hung my pack on a willow tree, got out my trusty fish line, captured a grasshopper and added fried trout to my regular fare of bread and bacon. Fresh bread daily, without the aid of an oven, is the main standby of the overland hobo. Here is the way we make and bake it:

My only utensil was the frying pan. In that I mixed a dough of self-rising flour and water. The loaf was shaped like a large doughnut, the hole in the middle being left to obviate that sad and soggy feeling noticeable sometimes in open-air bread. I baked my loaf in the frying pan, over the fire until the bottom was cooked; then I propped the pan on edge alongside the blaze and allowed the reflected heat to bake the top. Better results, hobo cooks aver, are obtained in this manner than by turning the loaf upside down in the pan. The weight flattens the uncooked surface and spoils the artistic effect. Having no broom straws with which to tell when the bread was done, I tested the loaf with my teeth, and was doubly thankful, sometimes, I had such good strong teeth. A little gravy, like mother used to make, is very nice on this bread.

For more than a week the only human form I saw was my own image in the pools from which I dipped up water. Being in no hurry, I spent a profitable lot of time fishing, and wasted some more wishing for a gun with which to slay jack rabbits. Every clump of sagebrush sheltered a family of long-eared jacks, and large colonies of unsettled rabbits hopped across the trail in the soft moonlight.

One night I found a mule whip lying in the



"ONE NIGHT I FOUND A MULE WHIP LYING IN THE DUST."

dust, and just as I stooped over to pick it up the whip coiled and sprung its rattle. My footwork in the sidestep getaway was so rapid the sudden start broke the strap that bound me to my pack, and I left it in the road. The rattler held his position and sent out repeated warnings that he was not to be monkeyed with; but I bombarded him with sand and bush tops, until he moved away and allowed me to recover the pack. After that, had I come across a mule whip, gold-handled and studded with diamonds, blazing in the light of a deceitful moon, I would have smothered the temptation to pick it up. Besides, I was making fairly good time without a whip.

A little after daylight one morning I was pitching my camp beside a purling streamlet, when a beauteous sound smote the air. It was a robust human snore, that started with a gurgle and wound up in a whistle. In a clump of bushes, so close to the stream his fevered feet were soaking in the water, lay a man rolled in blankets. When I spoke to him, he leaped up, pistol in hand, but seeing nothing but a frazzled kid, the stranger calmed down. He was heading for the effete East, and didn't care how soon he got there, he said. Bellview, a mining camp on the Wood river, was one day's stroll to the westward, and if that was my destination, I had best be going,

the man intimated. Seeing he didn't care for choice company, I cut out sleep for that day and hustled on to Bellview.

I reached Wood river at dusk and was crossing a bridge built of logs, leading to the town, when a familiar yet puzzling sound broke out at the other end of the bridge. There seemed to be some one whistling an operatic air to a Chinese orchestra accompaniment. Then a form came twitching and jerking along in the gloaming. My mentor—my guide, the tramp with St. Vitus' dance and the long stemmed frying pan, loomed up. It was the banging of his pan against the bridge rail that heralded the approach of an old friend.

"Hello, sonny," he said between jerks. "Where are you going?"

"Into the town," I replied. "Anything doing?"

"Well, I should say. Too hot there for me. This is Fourth of July and you're just in time to see the fireworks go off. Hear 'em shooting up the town? Wish you luck."

Having jerked out this bulletin, the tramp moved away in the darkness, still whistling and beating haphazard time with the frying pan.

Meanwhile our country's natal day was being blown off to beat the band. It sounded like the published reports of the siege of Port Arthur,

with the wails of the maimed and dying tossed in on the side. The mining camp had but one street, a crooked thoroughfare following the bend of the river. Great bonfires blazed in the middle of the street, and the grand illuminating effect was heightened by lanterns made of red paper on a framework of sticks hung on the shanties. In lieu of fireworks, the patriotic inhabitants let off guns and pistols loaded with balls, and the popping was truly exhilarating.

The main celebration raged in a big saloon and dance hall. Three or four rickety females took turns waltzing with half a hundred frenzied patriots, who employed each other as dancing partners until the ladies were at liberty. This terrible outburst of social grandeur and gaiety after my lonesome spell in the desert all but stunned me. Wishing to be patriotic and at the same time devilish, I left my pack outside the dance hall and treated myself to one glass of beer, which cost 15 cents. This, I believe, is about the cheapest Fourth of July I ever put in.

The soothing waltz strains for that spirited revelry were produced by an aged blind negro, who sawed away in the corner on a fiddle with one string. Whenever the more reckless dancers piled up near him the blind negro turned in terror and hovered his fiddle like a hen with a brood of chickens.

“Foh Gawd’s saik, gemmens, do be keerful!” he wailed. “Dey haint no moh such fiddle strings wifin foh hundred mile of dis year place!”

From which it will be seen the Committee on Music for that Fourth of July celebration was up against the real thing. The wool and whiskers of the sightless negro were white with age, and bodily infirmities had bent him almost double. How he got to that outlandish place and what was his regular business I do not know, for I then had troubles of my own and didn’t bother much with the affairs of other people. That night, regardless of the rattle of musketry, I slept sweetly in a sort of barn. In the morning I removed from a new set of harness a number of nice straps, needed to replace the ones on my pack broken in the encounter with the rattlesnake, and once more sought the dusty trail to the Pacific coast.

Near the log bridge was a small boy boiling coffee at a camp fire. Close by in the woods stood a battered stage coach, with four skinny white horses tethered to the wheels, eating breakfast food in the rough. The boy said his pa, who was still celebrating in the town, owned the rig. They had come from Boise City, 160 miles away, with a stage load of fresh vegetables. Pa had cleaned up a nice wad of money selling cabbages

to the miners, and would start for Boise that day. Pretty soon papa stopped shooting up the camp and came down to the bridge for breakfast. I boned the old man for a ride to Boise, and he looked with favor on the proposition. He was very sleepy, expected to be more or less drowsy on the homeward trip of four days and would take me along, provided I could drive a four-in-hand. Of course I could, and the battered coach tooled across the log bridge with me on the box.

The vegetable man curled up in the bottom of the coach and snored. There was nothing for me but to hold the reins, as the horses had too much sense to leave the trail. Sometimes the boy crawled inside and I had the entire Northwest to myself. Toward evening we encamped at a water hole just vacated by the St. Vitus' dance man, setting out on his night tramp. Still, I felt confident of beating him to Boise City, if he contemplated a visit to that place. Those were four grand days, tooling the four-in-hand, and I gaze with pride on my career as a stage driver.

But one untoward incident marred this trip, and I was not to blame. Besides his bottled goods, the old man had bought a pair of high-heeled calfskin boots, for which he paid \$15. In his waking moments the boots were his theme and glory. The second night out he was so far re-

covered as to sleep on the ground, using the new boots for a pillow. Field mice, or some equally ravenous rodent, banqueted on the \$15 boots, eating the feet off at the oily creases in the ankles. The rage and grief of the old man were awful to behold, and his frothings gave me a line on the folly of pinning one's faith to earthly treasures. For the next two days the indignant and highly incensed old gentleman cursed every living thing, including birds of the air and monsters of the deep.

At Boise I worked two weeks in a horse corral, and made a grub stake of \$9. On the outskirts of the city I bumped into a queer specimen arrayed from top to bottom in buckskin garments with fringe on them—a regular Buffalo Bill. The knees of the buckskin pants had stretched and bagged to such a degree the owner looked like the hind legs of a horse walking backward. His outfit consisted of two small wagons hitched en train, four mules, one wife, three little children and a whole arsenal of rifles, shotguns and pistols. This terror of the plains was headed for the Blue Mountains of Oregon to make a fortune chopping wood. If I cared to join the expedition, he would haul my pack and let me walk beside or behind the wagons. That sounded like a good offer, and I jumped at it.

We led a royal gypsy life for weeks. Much of the time the woman drove, while Buffalo Bill and I ranged ahead on either side of the trail and shot jack rabbits, and with rabbit liver for bait I sometimes fished in the cool of the evening. These products of plain and stream were shared in common in a large pot, and when we had neither game nor fish I built a separate campfire and cooked my own bacon, bread and coffee. A roving career begets a free and independent spirit quite pleasing to behold.

Thus the long summer and the longer miles oozed away. Near Baker City, Ore., I shook Buffalo Bill and toiled two weeks in a hay field for another grub stake. Then I joined an empty freight outfit going back to the coast—an outfit of four immense wagons and thirty mules in charge of one man. He took me along for company and to help with the team, in return for which the big-hearted freighter fed me real ham and eggs in prodigious quantities.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A Chapter Wherein the Bread Wagon Goes to Sea, But Soon Decides that Land is Better.

Sometimes a fellow long divorced from his regular occupation shows reluctance to buckle down to humdrum toil when it is thrust upon him. That was my fix at Portland, at the windup of a dusty promenade across Idaho and Oregon in a pair of canvas baseball shoes. The gay and debonair life of the desert wilds, freedom from convention and sleeping in the open air unfitted me for the irksome confines of civilization. At last I had become a genuine thirty-third degree hobo, but didn't exactly know what ailed me. That was the reason, perhaps, the four walls of the Portland Stove Foundry loomed up like a prison house.

In vain did I struggle against the desire to jump my job—the first one of its kind since leaving Leadville nearly six months before. And I needed the money, too. The canvas shoes had blown up and sprung leaks in various places below the waterline, and my overalls stood in need of repairs and laundry attentions. The rest of my toilet consisted of a short coat, cotton shirt with collar attached, necktie and hat. All through

my rambles I stuck to the tie—last remnant of respectability—or, rather, the tie stuck to me. The knot was jammed and I couldn't undo it, let alone losing the tie. Thus I looked nice in spite of myself.

My moulding tools had gone the Lord knows where; yet the Portland Stove Company grabbed at me when conscience impelled me to ask for work. The job was the making of lids for cook stoves. In size, weight, color and shape those cast-iron lids suggested the bread I had baked for myself in the desert; and that reminder helped to render me restless and homesick. At the end of two days the longing to be free tore me away from the foundry, and I once more took the road. I beat a river boat to Kalama, from which point, it was said, the wheat trains to Tacoma, Wash., were downy beds of ease for wandering tourists.

The man who piloted me against the wheat train had not consulted the latest guide book, for the grain was sacked and loaded on flat cars; no chance there for the stowaway. I allowed three trains to depart, and then took a desperate chance; piling into the caboose of the fourth and taking a seat on the toolbox. There was no one in the caboose but the rear brakeman and the conductor. The latter paid no heed to me until

the brakeman went forward; then the conductor, a young man with big, solemn eyes, looked me over and said:

“Ticket, please.”

“Haven’t any,” I replied.

“Where are you going?”

“Tacoma.”

“The fare is \$4.”

“I’m broke.”

The conductor seemed prepared for the worst. Without word or gesture he turned away, and sat in an armchair at the side door of the caboose, hanging his heels to a crossbar higher than his head. He sat there at least an hour, looking out into the woods, while the train rumbled and jerked, I huddled on the tool box, shaken with nameless fear. Never had I met up with that kind of conductor in all my hobo career. Would he rise in slow frenzy and slam me out the open door, or merely crack me on the coco with an axe, were the agonizing questions I asked myself. Much of the time I did not breathe, and clammy moisture stood on my youthful brow. Not once did I take my eyes off the conductor.

At length the train halted at a small station where a creosote works was in operation. Pine timbers for wharf building were treated with creosote, in vacuum to offset the ravages of the

teredo, or salt water worm. The conductor went out, leaving me on the tool box. When the train started the solemn-eyed railroader resumed his chair and motioned me to come near him.

“I once knew an old fisherman at Tacoma,” said the conductor. “He had a wooden leg made of pine. It was his habit to stand for hours in the water washing his nets. One Sunday, on the way to church, the aged fisherman collapsed and fell on the street. The water worms had bored into the wooden leg and honeycombed it. When he fell the splintered wood stuck out through his pants, and large numbers of people fainted at the sight. As the old fisherman was very poor, his pals and the sawmill hands at Tacoma gave a benefit dance and got him a creosoted leg. It was built at the works we just passed.”

After purging his system of this remarkable narrative the conductor once more lapsed into gloomy contemplation of the pine woods. Whether the story was true or the creosote works inspired it I do not know. And I was puzzled about my part—whether to laugh or to view the creosote leg as a profound scientific achievement. A giggle escaped me, and the conductor smiled. He had tried his story on the dog, and it was a success. Lucky laugh; also lucky dog.

The conductor put the pump on me, and I told

The Bread Wagon

him stories about my troubles and travels, after which he related some. Nothing more was said about railroad fare and tickets. We were chums, all right. It was after 6 o'clock in the evening when the train reached the outskirts of Tacoma, which town was so new it creaked. The foundry had closed for the day, but the conductor knew where the boss lived. He pointed out the house from the hurricane deck of the caboose, and slowed down the speed of the train so that I could get off and save the long walk back from the depot. After all, there is much in knowing when to laugh at the right time, but alas! my tact availed me nit. The Tacoma foundry didn't need expert help, so next day I turned my prow to the sea.

A big wooden ship, the Martha Rideout, of Boston, was loading lumber for San Francisco. I found her captain and another salt water skipper playing pool on a water-logged table in a saloon. While the master mariners banged the balls I hung in the background until my skipper beat the other fellow and hoisted in some free drinks, amid great laughter. Deeming the moment propitious, I butted in and asked the pool sharp to let me work my passage to 'Frisco on his ship. Talk about diplomacy and smooth work! Such was the



THE HEATHEN CHINEE LOANED ME HIS OVERALLS WHILE I
WASHED MINE.

skipper's good humor he placed his hand on my shoulders and said:

“Why certainly, young fellow; go right aboard.”

I went right aboard, and helped stow soggy lumber in the hold, which job lasted fourteen days, working from daylight until dark. Then we towed up Mr. Puget's Sound, sailed out through the straits and headed for the golden shores of California. Four days and nights I lay in the sail locker, the sickest hobo that ever plowed, harrowed and sowed the raging main. On the morning of the fifth day the Chinese cook slid back the door of the locker and tossed in a chunk of cold raisin duff the size of a cabbage. The lump rolled down under my nose, and I struggled feebly with the dawn of a newer and brighter life. Desire to live grew with the absorption of the duff, and in a little while the whole mass disappeared. In a day or two I felt like a new hobo. The cook made up a bed for me on his chest in the galley, and when the ship neared Frisco that heathen Chineese loaned me a pair of his overalls while I washed mine, so as to make a flash at San Francisco.

With \$1.20 in my clean overalls pocket—a purse contributed by the sailors—I passed in at the Golden Gate, which so many find hinged on mud.

That was the way it swung for me. The ship discharged all hands save the captain, mate and cook, and I went ashore with the rest. In a short time I became demonetized, and there was no work in sight. Night after night I went back to the Martha Rideout and sneaked into her fore-castle, via the bows of another ship lying alongside. The Chinese cook alone knew of my presence. He kept the secret from the captain, permitted me to sleep in the fore-castle and had always a little wooden tub of food hidden in the bunk I occupied. That Chinaman was the only friend I had in California, and when the ship cleared for more lumber she left me bankrupt and starving.

Dear old Sing Wah, I never expect to have another pal like him. When Sing sailed away I wept, but wouldn't like my old friend, Dennis Kearney, of Sand Lot fame, to know about it. In later years Dennis and I got quite chummy, and wrote for the same paper in San Francisco. Also, I amassed a bank account in that same town. The bank busted, too, with my coin in it, but this story carries enough tough luck of its own without lugging in a Chadwicked bank.

However, after Sing Wah left I became despondent and ill, and could get nothing to lay on my stomach. It would have lain, could I have

The Bread Wagon

got anything solid. On the afternoon of the second day without food, far out in Valencia street, I found a dime, and I've never seen a silver dollar that looked as big. Once in the possession of capital, there came the worry and care incident to safe investment and how to get the biggest returns, but I knew where to go. On lower Market street the curb was lined with fruit peddlers' wagons. Each cart had a board nailed upright on the seat, and over the board was drawn a paper bag on which the hucksters posted the odds—6 for 5, 13 for 10, and so on. After a careful inspection of the field, I played a long shot—sixteen large, bug-bitten Bartlett pears for a dime.

The side pockets of my coat had broken through into the lining, which mishap made a sort of blind tunnel around my spine. Into this secret cavern I poured the sixteen pears, and had a grub supply for a couple of days. Whenever hunger assailed me, which was often, I reached in and hauled out a pear.

Before famine time came on again I got work in a little jobbing shop in the residence district. The foundry was attached to the owner's domicile, and he had started to splurge in the manufacture of piano plates. My first day's toil netted about \$5, piece work scale, and I asked

I LANDED FORTY FEET AWAY.



for some money with which to pander to the unnatural cravings of a man who agreed to board me. The boss handed out a \$5 bill, which I gave to my landlord that night. Next day about noon the job and I became separated. A retired sawmill boiler furnished steam power for our works, and anyone who happened to think of it threw in coal or turned on the water. This fatal day the fellow who fired up forgot about the water, and pretty soon the boiler retired permanently from the scene.

Sand, pig iron, piano plates and mechanics littered the landscape for half a square. I landed forty feet away, with my back to the wreck, and kept right on going. At the hotel I paused long enough to coax a rebate of \$2.50 out of \$5 given the landlord the previous evening. Then I made a bee line to Mare Island and shipped in Uncle Sam's navy—went cruising among the South Sea Islands in a warship. Life ashore was growing too strenuous for me, particularly when they fired a salute of one steam boiler just because I went to work at my legitimate trade.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Hobo Comes Ashore with a Bum Lamp and Ships as Pilot on a Canal Boat.

A cruise of eighteen months in the ancient wooden warship, Wachusett, in the South Pacific, left me in shape to view the beauties of nature with one eye. Moreover, the Bread Wagon came ashore with a flat wheel. An explosion on shipboard doused my starboard glim, and for a period of five months I did all my looking with the other eye.

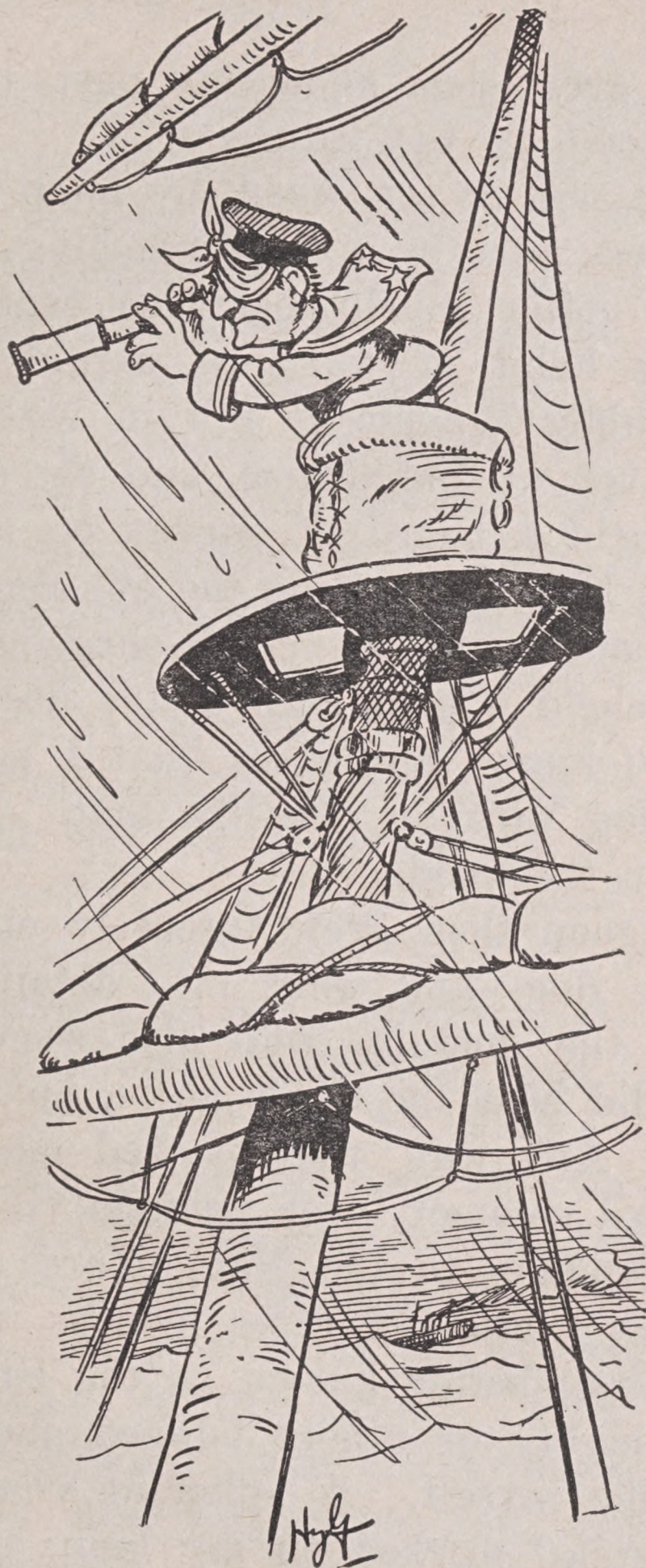
But Uncle Sam was good to his old shipmate. He had me freighted, at government expense, from South America to Brooklyn, and the eye carpenters there trimmed my lamp so that the sight was almost as brisk as before. Then they paid me off, and I set about ramb-ling some more.

The mishap that came near wrecking a mild blue eye happened in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. One day a young ensign named Clark got busy with a gun's crew of lobsters and tried to pass us out some Oral Instruction in Ordnance. That sounds pretty good, but it is bad for the eyes. To illustrate the lecture on

Ordnance, the ensign removed the fuse-stock from a six-inch shell. This fuse was a metal cylinder three inches long, containing a loaded plunger fitted with a percussion cap. Mr. Clark took the plunger out of the cylinder to tell us how it worked and dropped the plunger. As it fell I stooped forward to pick it up; the cap struck a metal plate in the deck and exploded, and my faithful eye stopped the discharge on its upward flight.

Now I know all about the workings of the percussion fuse for six-inch shells. Here are some of the details: My face was polka-dotted with minute chunks of scrapiron, and several lumps of burning powder lodged in the eyeball. The ship's surgeon dug out the powder and bound my eye in a flour sack that had three large purple Xs on it. We had the best of flour sacks. He said the wounds were nothing and that I would be all right in a few days. And so I would had they not sent me to stand lookout on the foretopsail yard in a wet gale. Cold settled in the injured eye, and my prospect of becoming an Admiral grew quite dull and blinky.

For months I lurked on the gloomy lower deck away from the light, attired in a pair of goggles and a thick mantle of melancholy. I



STANDING LOOKOUT IN THE FORE TOPSAIL.

thought a great deal about my past, but didn't care to brood on the future.

Our ship was at sea when my lamp went out, and we were forty-five days reaching the coast of Chile. After much coastwise cruising, following the habit of warships afraid to go to sea, the tubby Wachusett fell in with the Pacific squadron at Valparaiso, and the assembled surgeons held a board of survey on my smoky headlight. Notwithstanding the eye was a fierce-looking proposition, the chief surgeon the moment he beheld it exclaimed to the board:

"Do you know, gentlemen, that I once had a valuable dog with an eye like that. He got it poisoned in the woods."

The surgeon then grew intensely enthusiastic—over the dog—and went into details for the benefit of the doctors, who also seemed interested. I did hear the dog's name, but have forgotten it. Any way, they packed me off on a British mail steamer, deck passage via the Isthmus of Panama, to the Navy Yard at Brooklyn. There I lingered three months in the Marine Hospital, better known as the Stone Frigate, with eighty or ninety bunged and battered marines like myself. A splendid young doctor at the hospital worked on my lamp until finally he got the wick pricked up out of the oil and I could see a little of everything except money.

At length, one day, the main squeeze called me into his office and wanted to know if I had any home or friends. I mentioned the ancestral hall at Mudville, Ill. A few days later they handed out my discharge from the navy and all the pay that was coming to me.

Instead of seeking the fatted calf, I took a cheap steamer to Galveston, Tex., and eventually wound up on a cattle train, which was getting pretty close to the calf. An old-time winter was raging in Brooklyn, and I couldn't stand the cold after the long sojourn in tropic lands and islands. From Galveston I went to San Antonio on the tin roof of a day coach in the night time, and struck a bully job climbing poles for the Bell Telephone Company, which was installing a system. At this congenial task I wore a complete man-of-war uniform and a pair of climbing spurs lashed to my shins. It was the uniform that lured me into the navy, and I wanted to get my money's worth. People came miles to see me climb poles in that rig, for storm-tossed marines were said to be scarce in the heart of Texas at that period. Ever and anon I hung by one ear from the crossbar of a telephone pole, and the people felt amply repaid for their trouble.

Thus I continued to ramble and to roam until

I went to the bad at Waco. While loafing around a livery stable, expecting to get a job driving bus To and From, a gentleman who said he liked my appearance offered me a situation as traveling companion to two carloads of unsophisticated steers. The deal was closed at once. He gave me a pass, a lantern and a long pole with a nail at the end, and the steers and I started for Chicago. I punched the animals as far as St. Louis and then grew tired of beef on the hoof. My personally conducted tour collapsed, and, while the unhappy steers went on alone to Mr. Armour, I switched off and worked the Alton road as far as Peoria, Ill., looking for foundry jobs.

The advent of summer had closed most of the shops, so I cut across on the Wabash to Keokuk, Ia., intending to take the river to the Gulf and go to sea some more. On this box-car dash through Western Illinois I passed within twenty miles of Mudville, which town had had no bulletins from me in three years; but I did not stop off, having neglected to make my fortune while absent.

There is at Keokuk a government canal, under river and harbor auspices. The man in charge of the canal had a relative high in naval circles, and my talk, togs and papers made a hit

with him. Wherefore, I slid gracefully into a berth as lineman on a government steamboat at \$40. per month and board.

My success instilled vast quantities of bitterness in the bosoms of certain youthful Keokukians, who were educated for the canal, so to speak, by swimming, fishing and falling into it since birth. But, alas! those hopeless aspirants had no man-of-war uniforms. Neither was there a boy among them who had an eye almost blown out in the service of his country, and could talk with the Boss about squadrons and things. It was me for the soft snap, all right, and I could have been the sassiest brat on the river. Maybe I was.

Just the same, I bulged to the front and got promoted to pilot on a little towboat so small there was just room for myself, the boiler and Mr. T. Foley, engineer, in the order named. Sometimes, when cramped for space, I used to get out on the bank to turn myself around, and Mr. T. Foley was wont to do the same. I might have commanded a bigger boat, but for the enmity of the chief pilot of the canal fleet. One Sunday the old man spun a yarn about an immense tooth of some kind he found in the river. I foolishly asked him if the tooth came out of the mouth of the river. Two or three

mutts laughed, and the chief pilot thought I was guying him. He never got over it. In reviewing the past it occurs to me I might have been too fresh for fresh water sailing—and in a canal, at that.

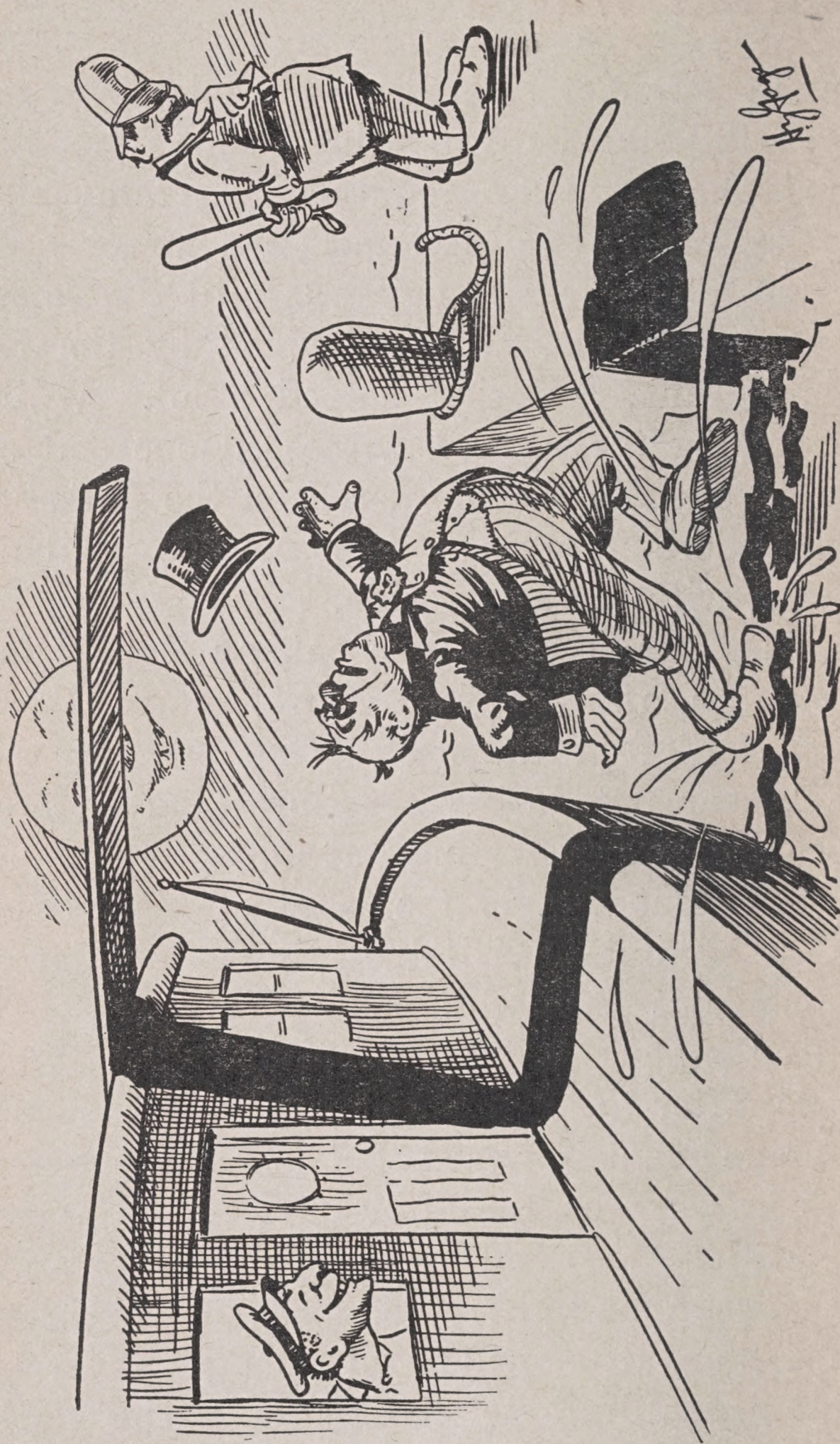
However, promotion is not always what it seems. As already stated, the boat I commanded was fully loaded with myself, the boiler and Mr. T. Foley, seated in the order named, and we had no room to carry a cook. This slight kink in the promotion business compelled me to board ashore, at the same wages, and my finances didn't do so well. Still, we did valiant service for the United States and Keokuk, towing small barges of stone in the dead waters of the canal.

The name of this boat was "The Messenger," and I deemed the handling of her my masterpiece in the art of perilous navigation. The Messenger was about as speedy as the boys who wear a blue uniform bearing that label. One day we ventured into the mighty current of the Mississippi. I headed the Messenger upstream and steamed full speed for three hours in the shade of one tree on the bank; then I whistled for help, and a real tug came out and got us.

But what could you expect of a boat blighted with that name?

Late in summer the fleet moved down to Quincy, Ill., and built a wing dam from the Missouri shore. They reduced me from pilot on the Messenger to deck hand on a larger boat that rated a cook. The pay was still the same, but my income was nearly doubled by the reduction in rank, and that helped a lot. While wing-damming the river I witnessed one end of a moist love affair that bordered on the pathetic, and once more impressed upon me the peril of monkeying with tender passion.

Our chief engineer on the boat, an elderly fat man, had an affair of the heart ashore, there being no ladies in the fleet. One evening the aged engineer put on his heart-breaking clothes. He wore a white vest, plug hat and gloves, and, with a fragrant bud in the lapel of his Prince Albert, he set out to visit the fair Quincy dame. The steamboat lay with her bow moored to the bank, the stern being swung out a little from the shore, after the manner of river craft. There was a stage plank forward, but none aft. Some painters at work on the after part of the upper deck had left the end of a plank projecting from the roof, and the pale, fickle moon threw a heavy, elongated shadow of this plank from the lower guardrail to the shore. The dark streak looked just like a staging.



HE STARTED TO WALK ASHORE ON THE SHADOW.

Well, the elderly engineer came out of his room, the flame of love flickering brightly beneath the white vest, and started to walk ashore on the shadow. It broke before he had gone two steps. We got a flash of his splash and a glimpse of his bald head ere the laughing waters closed over it. "Man overboard!" shouted the second engineer, and two or three small boats put off to the rescue.

The bald scalp bobbing along in the swift current served as a beacon, and sometimes a broad surface of the white vest rolled into view as the fat engineer lunged and kicked in frantic endeavor to reach shore. "Laura!" he yelled at intervals. "Oh, Laura, save me!" That may have been the name of the lady. We overhauled him 300 yards below the steamboat. The plug hat was never again seen by mortal eye—probably it filled and sank, never to win another trusting heart.

Owing to the state of his wind and wardrobe, the fat engineer sent regrets that night to the lady of his choice. When she heard how he fell overboard that fickle dame also sent back regrets and the ring, and thus another rosy dream blew up. Verily, he that is in love walks upon a shadow.

CHAPTER XX.

A Maiden Seeks His Hand in Wedlock but He Sidesteps the Proposition.

When a spotless maiden offers her heart and hand to a wandering hobo, Love is either blind or wears one eye in a sling. At least this is my belief, founded on painful experience with the tender passion. Being obliged to resign from a canal boat at Keokuk, Ia., on account of ice in the winter of 1885, I went South to save the price of an overcoat, and accepted the position of assistant pilot on a furniture wagon at New Orleans. Another fellow drove, and I steered bureaus and bulky bedsteads up flights of narrow stairs built like well augers. In this genteel manner I amassed a neat but not gaudy sustenance in fair weather, for when it rained my salary and meals paused at the same moment.

When not cruising in the wagon I roomed at the home of a German woman in an humble quarter of the city. She had a grown family, two of the girls being at home. Lulu was nineteen and reveled in a beau, a thin, pallid person, who wore in his shirt what I believed, at

that time, to be a diamond. Sadie had seen but sixteen summers and waded in the muck of as many winters. Plump and rosy, and with a great rope of yellow hair hanging down her back, she pined in secret. The mother dropped the flag on anything that looked like a beau, and in the sanctity of home Sadie dreamed of the misty future when she would trot in double harness with her ideal. Poor, deluded maiden!

As an annex to the family there dwelt in a cracker box in the back yard two sickly runt pigs—Henrietta and Myrtle. Their abode was not a joyous one. Stunted in body and mind and fretful in confinement, Henrietta and Myrtle grew peevish, morose and melancholy. They fought and squealed like married sisters living in one house, but the tragic finish was drawing on apace.

On Sundays, in the evening and on rainy days, when the furniture wagon hit bottom and stuck fast, I loitered in the bosom of the German family. We always were there in a bunch, and I batted 300 or better in the entertainment class. My repertory included a cruise in a United States warship; and the marvelous tales of hair-breadth escapes and things that oozed from me won Sadie's admiration and turned her golden plait a shade lighter. Also, I embroidered

for her a silken star of great magnitude and beauty, such a star as the naval bluejacket wears on the crown of his flat cap. With a set of the hoops brought from the ship and some colored silk thread I built a multi-pointed star that made the entire household blink. At the same time, I enmeshed Sadie's budding passion, but was not wise to the fact I had started something that wouldn't stop.

On the afternoon of the same day the mother invited me to murder Henrietta. The pigs in the cracker box could go the route no longer, and a tearful family council decided on Henrietta. I never had assassinated any swine; but, with the prestige of my warless war record and the silken star gleaming like a halo on my brow, I agreed to shed blood. So they brought the doomed Henrietta to me in the kitchen, where the family assembled, a prey at once to furtive pain and fresh pork.

Grasping the piglet around the middle in one hand, as though she was a sausage, my faithful penknife flashed, and Henrietta yielded up about one spoonful of life's crimson fluid. I scalded the remains in a small dinner pot, scraped and dressed them, and split the immature spine from snout to tail with the penknife, the only weapon employed in the crime. The job was



THE GREAT PIG-STICKING SCENE FROM DRYDEN'S LOVE ROMANCE.

done beautifully, if I do say it. From that moment the love-stung Sadie worshipped at my shrine. I was her unconscious hero in everything, pig-sticking included; and none but her modest self knew the sweet story of untold love.

As an Ideal I struck high C in two long jumps. Any man who could in a single day merge the fine arts of the ancients with the abattoir instincts of Armour & Co. stood out from the common herd a beacon of love and hope and happiness eternal. All I knew was that from day to day Sadie sat as usual in the home circle, listening to my lies, jokes, repartee and bonmots, mostly about furniture in misfit houses. I never saw her alone, and never thought of doing so, for that matter; but all the while the silken star stunt and the autopsy I held on Henrietta were getting in their fatal work.

At length there came a day when the furniture wagon palled on my thirst for conquest, and I shipped as cook on a Northern tugboat bound up-river. A farewell party in my honor was pulled off in the German family. The mother, Lulu and her pallid beau, his alleged diamond, the married sister, her baby and husband, who worked in a shot tower, and a few social neighbors assembled to see me off. We lapped up

several scuttles of suds and I never was in better form. Not until later did I recall Sadie was not among those present. In fact, I failed to note her absence. At the break-up of the party I dispersed to the tugboat and slept in a bedless bunk below the wash of the tide.

Early the next morning a sad-faced messenger arrived with a note from Lulu concerning her little sister. Sadie had cried all night and until 2 o'clock in the morning. The reason she sidestepped the farewell party was because she loved me and feared she would break down and show it. The note wound up with a request for me to return at once to Sadie. This great trouble, sprung so suddenly, inspired me to show the note to the coarse, able seamen on the tug. I wanted advice. Some of them looked curiously at me and others laughed; but when I proposed to go back they grew alarmed and tried to dissuade me. Just the same, I went, and found the old lady alone in the sitting room. She treated me with deference and respect.

“What seems to be gnawing Sadie?” I asked, being impervious to Cupid’s dart, and therefore fluent of speech.

“I don’t know,” said the mother. “Sadie is such a funny girl. She didn’t appear to care

for fellows until she had the spell last night."

"You don't think I've trifled with her?"

"No, indeed," replied the mother, much distressed. "She's in the kitchen. Go and talk to her."

In the kitchen Sadie stood at the table with her bare arms reposing on a pile of dishes in the center of a large pan. She had been weeping, and a smothered sob racked her bosom when she saw me. Being aware that washing dishes exercises a morbidly unwholesome effect on girls of sixteen, I took Sadie by the hand and towed her gently into the back yard. This was indeed a bad break, for when the troubled maiden beheld Myrtle biting splinters in the bottom of the cracker box, the scene conjured up visions of the departed Henrietta and the part she had played in our young lives.

The poor child broke down utterly. She laid her head on my shoulder and cried. In me there arose a series of sensations the exact location of which I do not now recall. I felt shocked and foolish by turns, and yet guiltless of intent in bringing about such a calamitous episode. For want of better action, I feebly stroked Sadie's dejected, dish-watery hand, and begged her to cheer up. Sadie was pretty and nice, and all that, and her distress filled me

with vast anguish. How I mentally cursed the silken star and Henrietta, the victim of those subtle wiles will never know.

“Why don’t you stay here?” she asked, commandingly. “You’ve traveled enough and seen all the world; and we like you. Some day a boat will sink, and that will be your end.”

I explained the reasons for shifting my base of operations, but the plan did not suit Miss Sadie.

“If you will stay here in New Orleans,” she went on, softly, sweetly and tenderly, “my brother-in-law will get you a job in the shot tower, where you can earn enough to keep us both.”

Had a large shot tower fallen on the back of my neck it couldn’t have jarred any more. My works stopped, like those of a watch dropped from a height, and when the works resumed it occurred to me I was confronting a crisis. The first and only formal proposal of marriage ever slammed at me had landed, and I was taking the full count. Holy smoke! With the skill of the quick and ready liar I handed the girl a fragrant bunch of paper flowers.

“Sadie,” I said, “It makes me dizzy to toil in shot towers. Moreover, I’m under contract to go in the tugboat, and if I desert now I’ll

be hanged by the neck until dead. Could you stand that?"

A mist of tears clouded the blue eyes, quenching the love beams there, and I hastened to pass another bouquet over the footlights.

"But when I've cooked everything they have in the boat, then will I come back to you," I promised.

She took that as my pledge to be her sturdy oak, and Sadie would be my clinging vine. Then I plastered a chaste and rapid salute upon her blushing cheek, deeming it my duty, and hiked out for the river front, bound to the maiden who loved me for my deeds alone.

At this point, gentle reader, we jump a lapse of twenty years, during which I heard no more of Sadie. A few days ago I straggled back to New Orleans and fell to thinking of the little blue-eyed girl with the golden braid. Somehow men will do those things. Maybe it's vanity. However, I set out digging up the past. The old home was all broken up, but I found Lulu in the neighborhood. She was pleased and likewise scared to see me, since I was supposed to be dead. A boat that sailed the day I left twenty years before went under with all hands. My friends thought I took the derelict, and had mourned me all those years.

Still, with my corpse eliminated, the meeting was a happy one. A spasm of pain crossed Lulu's face when we shook hands and she got a flash of my \$18 diamond ring. Did that sparkling gem remind her of the pallid beau, who, like myself, proved fickle? Heaven forbid! It shocked me some to learn that Sadie had married two years after my death, but I couldn't blame her for that. Lulu directed me to the place, and I went to call for old time's sake.

Sadie knew me, in a minute, and blushed as she led me by the hand, as I had led her into the backyard twenty years ago, only our sentiments, time-tempered, were vastly different. For an hour we talked, avoiding the shot tower, and then the subject of love's young dream came up and we both laughed.

"My! but I was stuck on the men in those days," she said.

From the tone I inferred Sadie was not stuck on them now since she had married one. That's different. Meanwhile, Sadie dispatched fleet couriers into the neighborhood to round up the children for my inspection. She brought out the silken star I made, twenty years ago, and the sight of it pleased me much. I was glad about the star, and a warm spot glowed in my breast for the woman who had not forgotten. Soon

the children came whooping in, led by a plump and rosy girl with the golden braid down her back—the Sadie of twenty years ago. My thoughts grew lumpy, and a wistful look stood in the mother's eyes when I took the little fat hand and caressed it.

“This is Henrietta; my eldest,” the woman said simply.

Like one stricken dumb, I bent my head in silent awe and wonder. That well-spring of human devotion was too deep for my rope. Right there dawned the conviction that the first opening buds of true love, larded with pork and mustard in the virgin breast, can never, never die; for Henrietta, you remember, was the name of the pig whose death gave birth to my romance. And, oh, how lightly had I cast aside the fitful god, who comes not at set command!

At once I became a Blighted Being and waddled away without another word for one more look at the shot tower. There was I old and beefy and bald, plugging on alone through life. Twenty years of bliss gone forever, and years of misery, perhaps, yet to come. The shot tower still stood where I spurned it in the burning past. Moss and ivy draped the tall stone shaft, and the base had gone to ruin. A policeman told me the institution on which I might have

reared a happy home had been closed down more than fifteen years. Of course, that helped some, and yet I am not satisfied. Lurking there in the shadow of that busted shot works, the might-have-been rose up to reproach me. Dimly, as in a fog, I saw a phantom doorway. Above the door a phantom sign: "C. Dryden, Esq., Fancy Sewing and Pork Butcher." Beyond the portal a circle of little faces and a glowing fireside at \$11 per ton.

Too soon the picture faded, giving way to the dull horrors of a sunny front room for a single gent; references given and required; bath optional, where these bleeding lines were written. Oh, well; what's the use? Let the dead past stay dead. I don't care. There must be something wanting in the sentimental side of my make-up. Either I am not a ladies' man or else I lacked the nerve to take a chance. Which is it?

CHAPTER XXI.

He Dabbles Some in Art, Ends His Hobo Career, and Becomes a Chicago Journalist.

There comes an end to all things—even the lure of tramp life and the ceaseless hunt for jobs. Having held the center of the stage for many weeks, shining the tin on myself in the role of Hobo, I will now get good and dabble in Art and Literature, after crowding the wind-up of a coarser career into one paragraph.

Following the pathetic love affair at New Orleans, I returned to the canal at Keokuk, Ia., for the summer. That winter I starred as a night watchman in a drain tile factory, toting a time clock to record my movements, and fighting off hoboes who wanted to pound their ear in the shelter of the kiln sheds. The next summer those who looked high enough could see me, far up in a glass pilot house, steering the lake steamer City of Milwaukee between the ports of Grand Haven, Mich., and the Wisconsin village the beer made famous. What an easy guess. Later in the season I stoked a tugboat that yanked lumber schooners in and out of

sawmill towns, and then sought refuge from the strenuous life in a West Side Chicago foundry. And this is where I begin to curb the nomadic spirit and grow genteel and recherche.

For quite a spell crayon portraiture, self-taught, as a side line to iron molding, did not strike me as incongruous. Nothing is that way—in Chicago—and I combined these arts with profit until a female patron put me out of the picture business. My system was to watch the death notice column in the daily papers and hustle for trade among relatives of the deceased. One Sunday a woman in South Halsted street gave me a commission. Her little girl, of whom she had no picture, passed away, and the mother asked me to dash off a life-sized crayon portrait of the girl from a photograph of her small brother, whom she resembled.

“Can you make her hair long and curly and part it in the middle, with some frizzes in front?” the woman asked, eyeing my rough and calloused foundry digits in some doubt.

I looked at the photo of a boy, whose short hair and projecting ears were his only claims to beauty, and I said I would extend my artistic temperament in the effort to make a girl of him.

“As for clothes,” the mother went on, conjuring up a mental picture of the absent one,



I STRUGGLED TO CHANGE THE SEX OF THAT PHOTOGRAPH.

“I want her to have a delaine dress, moss rosebud pattern, box plaited with velvet reverses, and double flounces around the bottom.”

“Will you have the dress hooked or buttoned in the back?” I asked vaguely, thinking she might not be quite up in the prevailing style.

“Pearl buttons look very—but never mind,” she said, rather abruptly it seemed. “The back won’t show in a front view picture.”

So I took the photograph of the floppy-eared boy and went away, a crushed and baffled crayon artist right from the jump. For seven nights, after foundry hours, and two Sunday matinees, I struggled to change the sex of that photograph. Ringlets and frizzes grew all right under the magic touch of my crayon point, and the fleecy cloud effect in the background was great; but the delaine dress, with velvet reverses knocked me out. In all my varied pursuits I had neglected to take up dressmaking; and that one job so disgusted me with portrait work I mailed the photo to the woman and buried my blasted hopes still deeper in the sand at Mr. Crane’s foundry. Gentle females, they say, have helped man in worthy enterprises. Oh, tut, tut!

One day I met B. Arthur Johnson of North Henderson, Ill., which place is not far from Mudville. While B. Arthur was being shoved with

honors, through our college at Mudville, I was learning the iron trade, that eventually helped me into trouble in various parts of the world. When we met in Chicago in 1887, B. Arthur was a journalist on the Mail, an evening adjunct to the Times, since deceased. Kirke La Shelle, present owner of a bunch of New York theatres and a lot of other good things, conducted the literary end of the Mail. And F. P. Dunne, the Dooley man, was city editor of the Times.

Well, B. Arthur Johnson took a violent interest in my future and pestered me two years with a bold proposition to break into literature. B. Arthur stuck to me like a ton of yellow fly-paper. He haunted me at my boarding house. He invited me to his hall bedroom abode and listened to the tales that flowed out of me as the contents of the pitcher flowed in. B. Arthur, journalist, said if those yarns were written as related I needn't work in foundries. He had a softer snap for me. I was too modest and refused to believe the good news; but the faithful B. Arthur kept plugging my game from the outside, while Dunne and La Shelle, interested by the unselfish Johnson of North Henderson, strove to yank me into the fold.

Once I was about to yield and become a journalist, when Johnson unwittingly crabbed his

own proposition. We were strolling out Robey street one sloppy Sunday in winter, and Johnson, the journalist, was picturing the joys of a literary career in Chicago. Ahead was a ragged laborer. As he walked his broken shoes gaped open just above the heels, exposing warm streaks of bright red wool.

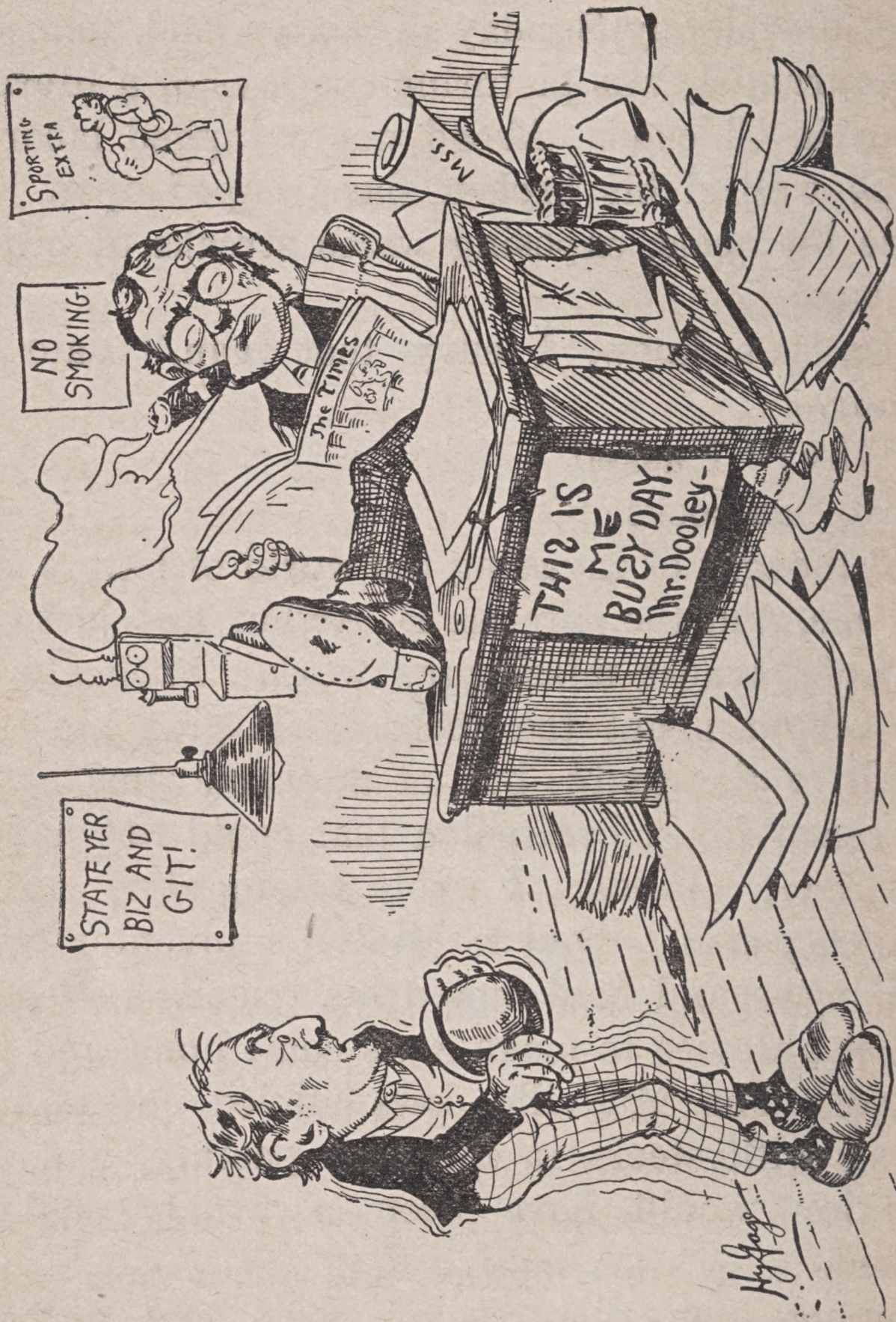
“Do you know, I envy that man,” said B. Arthur.

“Why?” I asked.

“He has socks.”

All thought of invading the world of letters forsook me, and the careless B. Arthur lost just one year of earnest missionary work. Probably he was joking about the socks. I'll give him the benefit of the doubt; but, at the same time, I did not yearn for a profession that could not haberdash itself. Finally, I wrote a long story, using a short pencil, about a Mudville inventor who went broke and bankrupted his friends trying to perfect a device to make cows come home and get milked. The Mudville cows stayed out nights, flirting with steers in the next pasture, and the invention would have been a winner had it worked.

Having seen pictures of poets and authors carrying manuscript for publication, I rolled my story into a tight little cylinder and tied a string



MR. DUNNE, HE SAID, WAS VASTLY TICKLED OVER MY FLOW OF LANGUAGE.

around it. La Shelle, who had to peel my literary sausage, said afterward he could have chucked away the whole business, only he had wasted two years trying to get me started.

When this story was printed in the Sunday edition of the Times the faithful B. Arthur Johnson came panting to my beanery. Mr. Dunne, he said, was vastly tickled over my flow of language and wanted me to go to work as a word hanger and draper and thought decorator on the daily staff. La Shelle and Johnson ribbed me up to tackle the editor for \$20 per week, but I would as soon have thought of asking for a job as bank president. Anyhow, the boarding house reeked with subdued excitement when the inmates discovered a journalist in their midst. As for mine, I was scared stiff—felt like a man doomed to the scaffold the day I started to spellbind the Chicago populace—March 11, 1889.

The landlady and I held a conference that morning as to whether the ethics of my new profession permitted a journalist to carry his dinner to the job. I owned a tin pail that rated a knife and fork in a metal scabbard on the side. In the bottom was a soup subway, and above that some tin galleries for cold corned beef and pie, the whole surmounted by a jam observatory that resembled the nozzle on a \$90 camera. I actually

started for the Times office lugging this pail, but got cold feet, went back and compromised on a sandwich in my pocket. Also, I carried a full length lead pencil that had a rubber eraser at one end and a needle point at the other.

La Shelle introduced me to Dunne, who spread the salve on thickly and refrained from noticing my hands in which pots of molten metal fitted easier than lead pencils.

“How much per week do you want?” asked Dunne.

“Same as I get in the foundry.”

“And how much is that?”

“Eighteen dollars,” I feebly replied, which was raising the limit \$6, but Dunne didn’t know that, and I got my price. La Shelle jumped me later for not sticking out for the \$20; but, then, I had my doubts. The idea of a lumpy galoot like me, who had lived the life of a Siwash Indian, ramming into a newspaper shop and demanding \$20 per week, was a proposition that made my scalp flutter. Just the same fourteen years of ragged-edge schooling on the underside of the world kept me in the business once I got started. My habit for years was to read the daily papers from top to bottom, and I was, therefore, loaded with language, spelling, padding, punctua-

tion, syntax, wind and other essentials without knowing it.

While waiting to be sent out for the purpose of enlightening the public, I sat in the office and looked at the journalists. Old and young men slid in and out and wrote and spat and cussed. One man had removed his coat and uncoupled his starboard suspender to give his inkarm freer action. A horn-handled pistol stuck out of his hip pocket, and on his left bosom was a badge as big as a fried egg. I thought he owned the paper. Once I made a bluff at scribbling something, just to seem busy; but my mouth was so hot and dry and caked I couldn't get any thought-juice on my pencil point.

Pretty soon the editor sent me off on a job—a baseball insurrection in an orphan asylum at Thirty-fifth street and Lake avenue; only he didn't tell me that, I found it out myself. Spring was coming, and the little boy orphans took to slamming a ball in the narrow confines of the asylum yard. The matron called the game on account of broken glass. A large and rebellious orphan named Bradley had spent the previous summer on the poor farm at Jefferson, where they had a forty acre field without any panes of glass in it. He led an uprising of three small orphans—one shortstop, catcher and rightfielder

—who ran away with Bradley to play ball on the poor farm.

At that time our beloved Uncle Anson was skating around the world on his stomach with the Champion Colts, and All-Americans. In a burst of inspiration little short of miraculous I named the ringleader of the baseball insurrection Old Anse Bradley, because he was such a kicker, and spun out the adventures of the three young players he released and left stranded over night in a garbage box at the corner of Wabash and Lake. This story was turned in to a ferocious copy reader whose pipe threw off the aroma of a backyard bonfire. While he read it I sat in the adjoining room, hot and cold by turns; then moist and clammy. My first stab at journalism, right off the reel, was undergoing the test, and I suffered the torments of a fellow hung up by the thumbs. Without going into details—shining the tin on myself some more—Old Anse Bradley passed muster and I became a reporter of plain, blue, purple, old gold, green, yellow and varitinted facts, but never once aspired to the exalted realm of journalism.

The story of Bradley was more or less upholstered, but one day I produced a plain, true tale about a Chicago hospital for women, omitting all names and localities. While I worked in the

foundry one of the girl coremakers was operated on for tumor. They employ girls in Chicago iron factories, toiling their young lives away in the dirt and gloom so as to live and die above reproach and wear velvet plush to and from the shop. Well, the female surgeon did a neat job on the tumor, and, after sewing up the patient with silver wire, a nurse found that one of the antiseptic sponges used in the operation was missing. Much against her will, the head surgeon broke the stitches, opened the patient and retrieved the canned sponge. In my story the lady doctor said:

“I’m glad my attention was called to this little matter, for that sponge is worth sixty cents.”

Editor Dunne said I was the most picturesque liar ever lassoed in Chicago; but he liked the literary tone of the article, and he printed it. Several weeks later there came a letter from the woman surgeon of a certain Chicago hospital, inclosing my sponge story, clipped from the Boston Medical Journal, the only thing she read. She was quite sarcastic, and said that, while these trifling mishaps will occur in the best of hospitals the writer of the article showed greater familiarity with slang than with the more delicate technique of the medical profession.

Thus did sweet vindication come my way. Edi-

tor Dunne shook my horny mitt and took back all he said about my being a prolific and tireless liar. Backed up by this indorsement, everything I write must be true. If you don't believe it, ask Mr. Dooley and Rube Waddell.

THE END.

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